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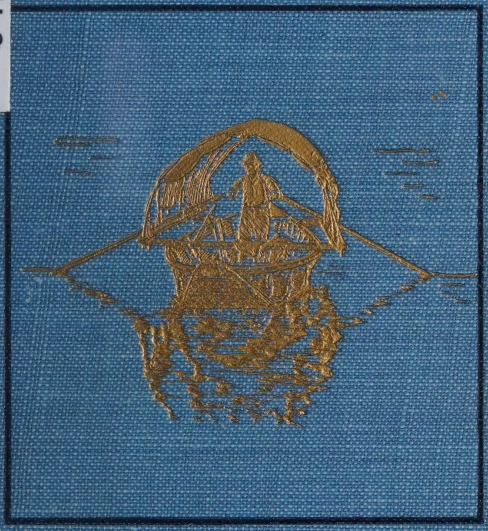
THINGS SEEN ON THE TALIAN LAKES



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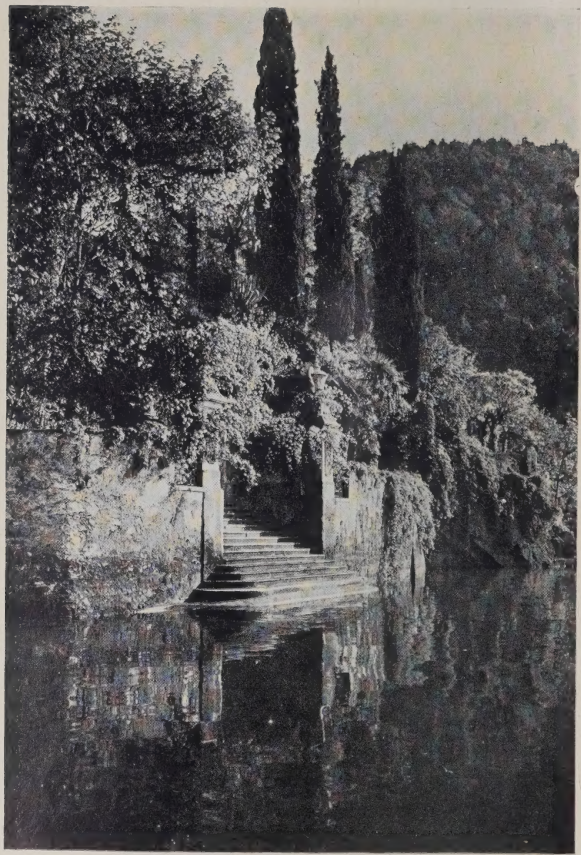

Photo Brunner] [*Como*

THE WATER-ENTRANCE OF A VILLA ON LAKE COMO.

With its luxuriant vegetation, its tall cypresses, and its bright reflections it is a very characteristic scene.

THINGS SEEN ON THE ITALIAN LAKES

BY

LAURA M. RAGG

AUTHOR OF "THINGS SEEN IN VENICE," "THE WOMEN ARTISTS OF BOLOGNA," &c., &c.

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS & A MAP

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To

MY DAUGHTER, BICE,

BORN IN 1907 AT MENAGGIO, ON THE LARIAN LAKE,

I DEDICATE THESE RECOLLECTIONS

OF "ITALIA BELLA."

Printed in Great Britain

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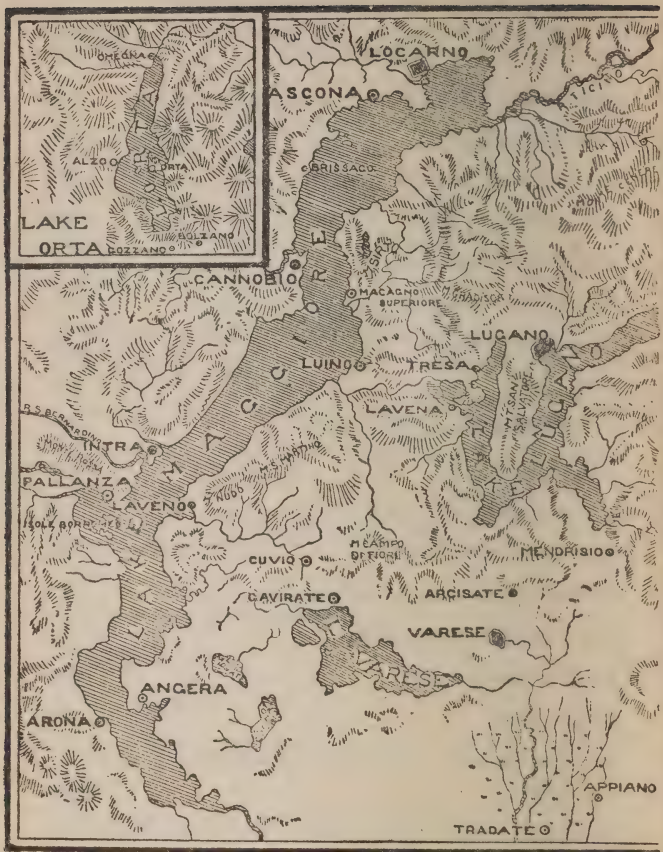

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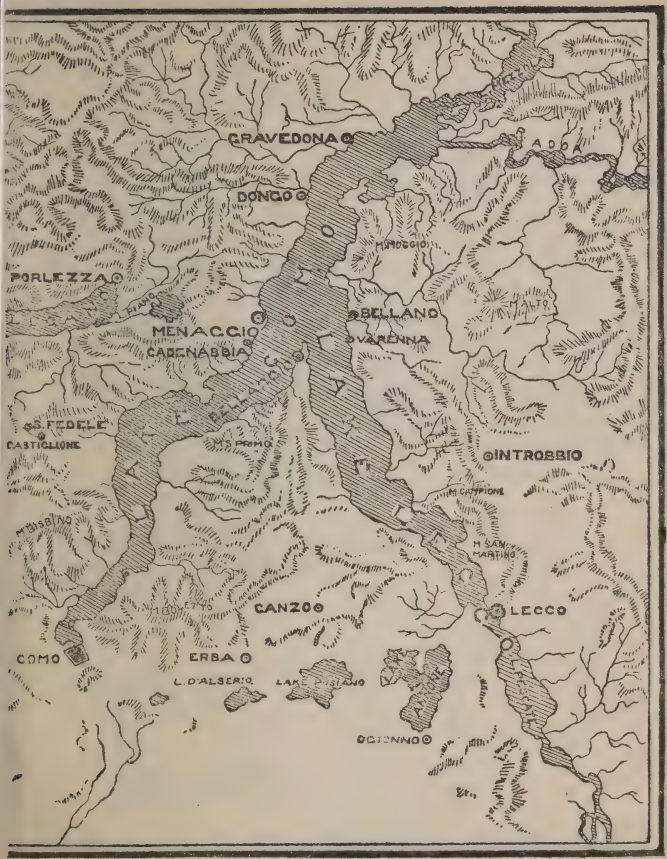
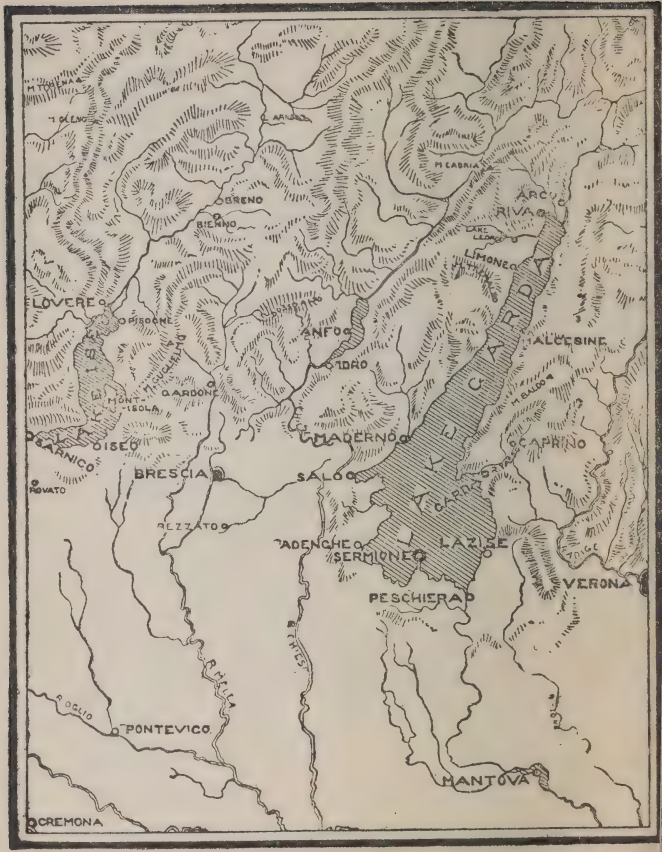


VARESE, LUGANO, AND COMO



LAKES GARDA AND ISEO

Photo Brunner [*Como*

"GOODS TRAFFIC" ON LAKE COMO.

Many *Camballi* and other boats are now provided with electric motors; but in a favourable wind they thriftily hoist their ancient picturesque sails.

CHAPTER I

A GLANCE AT HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

THE lower portion of the Alps, sloping gently to the Lombardo-Venetian plain, is characterized by a series of fiord-like lakes. The series begins on the west in the Strona Valley with the small, straight, narrow channel of Orta. Then come the great trio, Maggiore, Como, and Lugano; the first piercing furthest south into the plain; the second pushing its neck furthest among the northern heights; the third and least writhing serpent-like midway between them, and nearly completing a loop with its tail. Next, but at a very respectful distance, is the small, more simply shaped Iseo, lying among the Brescian Alps. Last and easternmost, in remote grandeur, lies the expanse of blue and sea-like Garda, surpassed in size among European lakes only by Geneva and Constance.

Modern hydrography views these basins as fissures, produced by various kinds of pressure, and then scoured and deepened and altered in shape by glacial action. The southern branches of Como may recall the ramifications of the glacier of the Adda; and part of Maggiore was certainly hollowed by the great Ticino glacier which flowed across Monte Ceneri. Lake Varese and the lakelets of Brianza are, on the other hand, true moraine lakes, depressions in a great bed of glacial debris extending between the southern ends of Como and Maggiore. Iseo and Garda illustrate the effect of immense dams of moraine debris; thus the glacier of the Val Camonica has banked the southern end of Iseo, and the river Oglio, piercing it with difficulty, deposits at the northern end its encumbering detritus; while the land for miles beyond the southern end of Lake Garda is a stupendous moraine bed. But for their immense depth these lakes would have been filled up by the deposit continually brought down by the

Alpine streams which steadily push out deltas further into the water. The Ticino is driving southwards the head of Maggiore, also menaced by the alluvia of the Maggia. Further down the lake the impetuous Tosa has cut off, since mediæval days, one of its arms and thereby formed the lakelet of Mergozzo. The banked-up detritus of the Adda has in the same way created at the head of Lake Como the Lake of Mezzolo, which another torrent, the Mira, descending from the Splügen, is busily filling. The Lecco arm of Lake Como is silting up with the Adda's deposits of peat and slime; and in bygone ages the fiord-like head of Garda must have penetrated beyond Riva up the valley by which the train now reaches Arco,

"Appie dell' Alpe che serra Lamagna
Sovra Tiralli."

(At the foot of the Alps that above the Tyrol shut in Germany).

In the famous passage from which these lines are taken Dante gives us a succinct account of the geography of the lake. "A thousand springs and more" from the mountains between it and Val Camonica fill the deep basin. At Peschiera at the southern end "where the surrounding banks are lowest," it lets flow all that it cannot hold. And when this overflow "makes itself a river down among green pastures" it no longer calls itself Benaco (Garda's sweeter name), but Mincio.

In like manner Maggiore fills from the massif of the Gotthard, and sends out the Ticino, placid and strong, to irrigate the plain of fruitful Lombardy. The glacial waters of the Grisons feed the northern branch of Como, and issue as the broad Adda. Lugano and Orta are peculiar in that the former is filled by Maggiore's overflow, conducted through the conduit of the Tresa, and the latter very largely by deep springs bubbling up in its bed, while it gives off its waters not at the southern, but at the northern end. This singularity it celebrates proudly in a dialect distich:

"La Niguja la va in su
E la legg' a la femon nu."

(The Nigoglia runs upwards, and we make its law.)

History and Geography

Como, Maggiore, and Lugano, lying in neighbourly proximity and parted by ranges of no great elevation, seamed with easy passes, are commonly called by the Italians I Tre Laghi, the Three Lakes. We shall do well to adopt this collective appellation; it expresses a geographical fact, recalls an historic past, and indicates a tourist convenience.

Etruscans, Celts, Romans successively occupied this Lakeland. In the seventh century it was part of the Lombard kingdom which had Pavia for its capital. From the tenth to the fourteenth it shared the tumultuous vicissitudes of that northern Italy which, owing a nominal allegiance to an ultramontane Emperor, was divided and ruled by small territorial despots, and was continually torn and wasted by internal strife. In the fifteenth century it lay with more security within the Duchy of Milan. After the fall of the great Sforza, Duke Ludovico il Moro, it passed under French, Swiss, and again under French domination; only to fall a prey at last to the immense Hispano-German domination. But before this disastrous "last fate" was reached, the Lakeland trinity was impaired. A strip on the northern shores of Maggiore and Lugano, together with the important little town of Bellinzona, had followed the example of the rich Valtellina, and detached themselves from Lombardy to throw in their lot with the growing Swiss Confederation. We certainly cannot blame them. They left an Italy which was scarcely even "a geographical expression," and a province insulted and maltreated by alien governors, for prosperity and freedom within republican united states. But to-day, when Italy is one of the Great Powers, and when the events and sequels of the War of 1914 emphasized the importance of natural frontiers and the principle of Nationality, we cannot help regretting the anomalous appearance of torpedo boats and searchlights and officious *doganieri* within an area whose population are one in speech, in blood, and early history. The necessity of changing money and enduring custom-house acerbities at the most invisible and arbitrary frontiers largely

counteracts the efforts of Swiss bankers and Italian engineers to improve on the natural means of communication between the Three Lakes, and at every point by electric railways, trams, and excellent motor roads to suggest and encourage what is known as a "round tour."

Travellers to whom an Italian holiday is the event of a lifetime or of a honeymoon may avail themselves thankfully of these facilities for seeing the Three Lakes in rapid succession; and those who take them as a stage of a frequently repeated outward or homeward journey would do well to enjoy them separately.

Comparisons are odious; but they are inevitable if we review each of these fair goddesses successively. Each of the trio has individual charms which she reveals in full only to her intimates; and of us is demanded not a judgment of Paris, but the leisure for appreciation. Moreover, these Lakes are creatures of many moods. They smile one moment with glancing glee, and the next burst into sudden tears. They lash themselves to raging passion, and then lie spent and flaccid in swooning calm. They can be "off colour" on some days, and "in face" on others. They change their vestures with the seasons —and the seasons vary from year to year. It is, in fact, impossible to foreknow or to "stale their infinite variety."

And therefore we would declare, adopting the language of Baedeker, that the shores of the Three Lakes are eminently "suitable for a long stay."

This assertion applies with ampler rather than with diminished force to Garda, which has the misfortune—and additional charm—of receiving a comparatively small number of British visitors. She is, of course, less accessible to an English tourist whose holiday and purse do not happen to be long; nor does she—like the Three Lakes —offer an easy halting-place on a main line to Florence, Rome, or Genoa. She has indeed a station—Desenzano—on the iron way between Milan and Venice, and her wonderful blueness is frequently pointed out and descried from the window of a moving train; but the Calypso of the Lagoons is apt to detain her Ulysses till they tear

Photo Brunner] [*Como*

PEASANT LABOUR ON THE SHORES OF COMO.

The women are probably carrying on their backs burdens fully as weighty as those borne by the mule.

themselves from her embrace too late for any digressions on a homeward journey, while a well-founded fear of discovering no vacant seat in a crowded express deters many travellers from alighting at stations intermediate between the two termini.

So Garda stands aside from the Lakeland itinerary of the modern tourist in much the same way as she has always stood slightly aloof from intimacy with the Three Lakes. The strongest, broadest outlines of their history are identical with hers; but the light and shade and the details are different. One notable variation is the fact that the advance of the Roman eagles was not, as in Lombardy and Piedmont, obstinately opposed. The Veneti and the Celtic Cenomanni entered into alliance with Rome in the third century; and Roman civilization, earlier and more thoroughly established, left a deeper impression on Garda than on the Three Lakes. A still more important feature of Garda's history is its long security under Venetian rule. There was indeed an ugly interregnum, resulting from the European coalition against the Republic, known as the League of Cambrai. But the tide turned again when Venice astutely detached the Pope from the League; and her mainland possessions, including the cities round Lake Garda, one by one voluntarily returned to her light yoke. While never giving her dependencies a voice in her destinies and government, Venice sought to win "their heart and love," and was singularly tender and tactful in reference to local laws, manners and customs; and both shores of Garda, escaping the stultifying phase of Spanish rule which pressed on the Three Lakes, enjoyed under the standard of St. Mark a prolonged period of ordered freedom.

When, in 1796, the flood of French invasion overwhelmed the Republic in its corrupt dotage, the history of Garda and Iseo once again ran on parallel lines with that of the Three Lakes, until the dire Peace of Villafranca detached the eastern shore of Garda from the remainder of Italian Lakeland, and compelled it, with the rest of Venetia, to remain Austrian—for seven years. In 1866 Venetia too

was freed, and shortly afterwards, by a plebiscite of her people, was united to the kingdom of Italy.

But the frontier line marked out by Dante was still not rightly drawn; the mountains of the Tyrol did not "shut out Lamagna." The Trentino, extending down to the northern point of Garda, remained Austrian.

In 1915 the lake was again a battle-ground, and the bleak massif of Monte Baldo, rising sheer above the north-east shore, echoed to the roar of cannon. It was undoubtedly owing to the smartness of the Italian *alpini*, who got their artillery to its summit immediately war was declared, that the lake was saved from falling into Austrian hands. From the highest peak, known as the Altissimo, they completely commanded the strong Austrian fort on squat Monte Brione far below at Torbole.

To-day the consummation so devoutly wished by the patriotic makers of modern Italy is an accomplished fact; and Garda has earned a full and perfect right to be called an Italian lake.

Photo Brunner] [*Como*

A PEASANT GIRL

Carrying a load of hay in her *gerla*.

CHAPTER II

SPRING AND WORK AROUND THE THREE LAKES

" E di zaffero i fior paiono, ed hanno
De l'adamante rigido i riflessi,
E splendor freddi e chiamano a i silenzi
Del verde fondo."

CARDUCCI.

(*Translation.*)

And the flowers seem tinged with the hue of sapphire,
Flashing back a sparkle of diamond brilliance,
Radiant, cool, inviting me to go down
To green, deep, silent abysses.

"HÆC est Italia Diis sacra!" was the quotation which sprang to Goethe's lips as his travelling carriage rolled down the southern slope of the Brenner Pass. "I could kiss the dust which covers the axles of the wheels," he wrote, with emotion which the modern railway traveller, emerging from the Simplon or the Gotthard tunnel, can scarcely share. Yet we, too, note with joy that "the sun is warm and glowing," and that "the vegetation, scarcely existing on the mountains, is here full of life"; and perhaps, after experiencing the dreary rigour of a lingering northern winter, we are disposed to echo the great German's declaration that "here one begins again to believe in a God."

The gamboge of cowslips is studding sunny banks, and wind flowers lift their fragile blossoms in the shade. High on the hill slopes we find well into late March the Christmas rose which is in its fullest beauty and profusion in early February. Blue hepaticas and periwinkles attain a brighter hue and ranker growth than they possess in ultramontane lands; but the "rathe primrose" parts with the faint sweet perfume which is its delicious English attribute. Nor shall we find in this Italian spring those patches of wild hyacinths which seem to imprison a bit of heaven in our woodlands. But the deeper, harder

cerulean of Italian skies is caught by the large deep blue gentians which fleck the grassy slopes near the level of Lake Como on warm early April days, and which we meet again five or six weeks later if we ascend to the summits of Monte Generoso or the Mottarone.

It is said that a century or two ago both wolves and bears were to be met in the wilder mountain fastnesses of Italian Lakeland, and the steinbock had certainly his abode among the heights which tower above the north-east shore of Lake Como. To-day his sole Italian refuge is in the Val di Cogne, the favourite hunting preserve of King Victor Emmanuel; and no one in the neighbourhood of the Three Lakes has shot anything bigger than hares, pheasants, black game, and hill partridges, or glimpsed anything fiercer than a badger, or met anything wilder than the goats and cattle of the villages, collected and driven out to grass by a single herdsman, or surprised anything more timid than the largest of Italian lizards. He is a beautiful fellow a foot long, clad in a coat of mail of gold and emerald; but in spite of it is as frightened and alert as his small dark-hued relations, who bask upon every hot wall, and run up perpendicular surfaces, and dash into any minute cranny at the approach of man.

If our energies are not equal to steep hill-climbs and woodland rambles, we may enjoy an utter laziness in a rowing-boat on the lake. Only we shall be wise to hire boat and owner together. We can row with him if we want exercise, and he will most courteously fall in with any of our whims which are not inconsonant with those of the lake. Born and bred upon these shores, he is conveyed to fresh fields only by the exigencies of military service; and when the writer asked a Como *barcaiolo* what pleased him most in Venice, where he had been stationed during the war, he replied, "The *Sea*." He is rarely able to swim, and professes a sort of fatalism as regards drowning; but in fact he is secure in his intimate knowledge of the habits and humours of times and tides and winds. He holds occult communication with clouds and hills, and the observations of his forebears are embodied in quaint

rhyming proverbs, such as the often quoted dialect distich:

> " Quando el Legnon el met el capel
> Tra via la ranza e ciapa el rastel."
>
> (When Monte Legnone puts on his hat,
> Throw away the sickle and take the rake.)

He does not reckon as winds the normal, eminently healthy air-currents blowing from the hills to the lake, which he calls by familiar, picturesque, pet names. The breeze of the morning is Tivano on Como, Tramontana or Mergozzo on Maggiore. The southerly or south-easterly current which mitigates the heat of afternoon is the Breva on Como and Lugano, the Inverna on Maggiore. It may lash the lake into big waves; but it is not *wind*. Quite another thing is the *Vento di Colico*, which comes raging down the Splügen Pass, and riots for a good twelve hours, and sometimes for three days, round the Larian Lake; or that howling *Maggiore*, which on the lake of the same name can arrest the progress of a large steamer, and prevent its landing at certain difficult piers. These mighty fiends do, however, give certain recognized signs of their approach. Accidents to small boats and petrol launches arise chiefly from the extraordinarily sudden thunderstorms which, chiefly in late spring and summer, suddenly burst upon the lakes. They offer to those who are safe on shore a panorama of extraordinary grandeur: the thunder roars and echoes along the mountain ranges; the hailstones spit and rattle; the dark sky behind the peaks is burst through by a blaze of jagged lightning; and the waters take on sinister hues of indigo, of unnatural metallic green, or of vivid Prussian blue. The storm dies suddenly as it came, leaving in the air a clean, washed feeling, and on the lake the grey, still pallor of exhaustion. Next morning all is changed: the distant mountains have a rosy, veiled transparency; the nearer wooded hills a curious mossy softness. They throw long green reflections into the lake, still and clear as glass. Boatmen, lying half asleep under the russet awnings of their boats, are

gently rocked by wavelets which seem too lazy to lap the shore.

A row of women at the water's edge are, however, vigorously making up for a lost-washing yesterday. They are too busy to talk, but there is sociability even in their silence. Their heads are enveloped in bright handkerchiefs; their faces have a healthy out-of-door colouring. They kneel in three-sided boxes raised on a low stand—an arrangement infinitely less fatiguing than stooping over a wash-tub. On the sloping board in front, pushing out into the water, the soiled garments are soaped and scrubbed several times, with intermediate dippings. They are rolled up, clean but soapy, and thrown into the pointed basket or *gerla* which is hoisted to the shoulders and carried home. Then its contents are put in *bucato*, that is, into a tub of boiling water with wood ashes. They are well stirred in their hot bath, but no more soap or rubbing is required; and then they are dipped again in cold water, and dried to snowy whiteness in sun and wind.

The great advantage of this method of washing is, of course, its economy of fuel. A lump of coal and a silver five-franc piece are two objects which many a child of nine or ten would not recognize if they were shown him to-day. His home, his church, the village street, are lighted by electricity; his mother cooks over a handful of charcoal, and grandmother puts some in the *scaldino* on which she warms her frozen old hands; while water is boiled in a cauldron suspended over a few blazing logs, a fire easily lighted and quickly extinguished.

Woodcutting around Lake Como appears to be proceeding in a more reckless and less regulated way than on the other two lakes; and some of the older men shake their heads and forecast fireless days for their descendants. The trees felled and sawn on the heights are slung in bundles on a tightly stretched wire rope, down which they descend to the lowlands with lightning speed. Brushwood, which we see neatly piled in the rear of every habitation, is brought down by laughing boys who drag young saplings with ropes or chains over the steep, cobble-stoned

Prof. C. H. Bryan, F.R.S.]

SAN MARTINO ABOVE CADENABBIA.

In the distance the peninsula of Bellagio with Villa Serbelloni among its woods.

salite, thereby polishing them to perilous slipperiness. Women, too, often pass and greet us, bearing immense loads of kindling wood on their backs, supported by a sort of rude yoke passing round the throat. It is hard work, and they age quickly; but in youth their eyes are bright, their skins clear, their teeth strong and pearly, their limbs supple, their deportment superb. They are often shod with rope-soled shoes; and if we would walk happily upon these hills we shall disregard appearances and adopt this form of foot-gear. They are, however, more costly, and therefore less generally worn, than are the wooden clogs, fastened across the toes by leather thongs, and leaving the heel at every step, in which, with a fine instep movement, these hill girls fearlessly ascend and descend the steepest paths. When they are dressed in their best, however, they, like the "young ladies" in shops and workrooms, wear the most exaggerated of modern Italian high-heeled shoes, in which they walk with some deliberation, but with faultless grace. A bevy of Italian maidens, whatever their station or their métier, in fact invariably exhibit a quality conspicuously absent among English girls, whether University students, High School scholars, or young working women—a quality called by our grandmothers deportment.

Nowadays the peasant's wooden shoon cost five lire a pair, and the leathers are poor and constantly break. Before the war they could be bought for 75 centimes or a lire, and lasted for years. The "modern instance" is indicative of the general rate of increase in prices and decrease in quality; while it must be remembered that even before the war taxation was excessive, and duties on necessaries—*e.g.*, on such a necessary as salt—were wellnigh prohibitive. And yet, in spite of augmented duties and of scarce and costly supplies, the inhabitant of Italian Lakeland is obviously better off to-day than he was ten years ago; his churches, schools, raiment denote a higher standard of cleanliness and comfort; his conduct and bearing greater hopefulness and efficiency.

One of the most able and beloved of Comasco parish

priests confirmed and partially explained the writer's observation of these points. Wages are higher—sixteen to eighteen lire a day instead of a pre-war three or four; and owing to the ingrained habits of thrift, and in spite of more drinking and smoking among the younger men, this increase more than counterbalances the rise in prices. Then American emigrants—recruited from nearly every Lombard village—instead of dribbling home, or returning as elderly men, were brought back *en masse* as reservists, with their savings and their higher standards of living. Lastly, but of prime importance, the great—though happily unneeded—measures of defence, the military roads, the magnificent trenches and gun emplacements, and artificially enlarged caverns which scar these mountains, were mainly the work of civilians, employed by Government.

When the "gran stanchezza"—the great weariness—following the war had passed, the spring of Lakeland energy bubbled up with fresh vigour. Delayed building was resumed; there was a general repairing and rearranging. Hotels, which had been converted into hospitals, were made ready for their original uses, and enlarged or redecorated. The silk mills, which employ thousands of women and young girls on Lake Como, and innumerable small but flourishing factories of various kinds on Lake Maggiore, resumed work at full time and strength. Apart from the silk winding and weaving which is the speciality of the district, and which is chiefly carried on by female labour, the Comaschi have but few industries; hence the stream of male emigration to America. Husbandry is the main occupation of both sexes, though it seems to the writer that there is a new tendency to absolve the weaker sex from its more strenuous operations. Miracles are performed in the terracing of hillsides, and the utilization of unlikely soils and sites. A plot on the bare hillside is broken up and carefully weeded, irrigated, and manured. Here are the grey-green leaves of artichokes, there a clump of lettuces and a row of early peas. The ancient alimentary trinity—corn, wine, and oil—is represented. In one

Photo Wehrli] [*Kilchberg, Zurich*

THE ISOLA COMACINA.

Between it and the mainland is the calm strait known as the Zocca dell' Oho. The Promontory beyond is the Dosso Lavedo, with Villa Arconati or Balbianello at its point.

corner is a patch of bright green wheat, which in autumn will at least serve to feed the hens wandering round the homestead. A vague fencing is formed of pollarded elms, linked by vine festoons; and in due time the small proprietor will "tread the wine-press alone," and a big vat will "boil" like a seething kettle in his outhouse. Above the garden patch are a terrace or two, where the pale pink of peach blossoms shows exquisitely against the branching grace of olives. Somewhere, too, there will be a few of the inevitable mulberry-trees, the leaves whereof are the prime factors in silkworm-rearing, carried on in every village in the Como district. What a different aspect Lombard landscapes would have to-day if Ludovico il Moro had not introduced the mulberry!

Much transport of garden stuff is effected by means of the indispensable *gerla* hoisted on the human back, and incredibly large loads of hay are borne on the human head; but sometimes—*e.g.*, for the conveyance of manure to enrich the dry limestone soil—a cart drawn by two splendid white oxen is requisitioned. Neither the construction of the cart nor the breed of the oxen has changed since Virgil's days. As one watches the splendid creatures one is disposed to cry with the Italian poet, Carducci:

"T'amo o pio bove; e mite un sentimento
Di vigore e di pace al cor m'infondi
O che solenne come un monumento
Tu guardi i campi liberi e fecondi
O che al giogo inchinandoti conterto
L'agil opra di l'uom grave secondi."

(I love thee, sacred ox. Thou fillest my heart with a soothing sense of power and peace. Solemn as a monument, thou regardest the free and fertile fields, and bending contented to the yoke, thou gravely secondest the alert toil of man.)

Small holdings such as these are numerous, and are sold for high prices; but they barely repay the incessant toil of their cultivator. Large properties are cultivated on the *Mezzadria* system; the proprietor supplies land, implements, and stock; the peasant and his family supply labour; and the produce is shared between them. Land

is, however, often leased for a money rent, and there is a tendency on the part of the tenants to prefer this arrangement, and to regard it as more favourable to themselves. Communal Alps—hill grazing grounds—are put up annually to the highest bidder, who then takes a fixed sum from his neighbours for every head of cattle grazed. Some communes, however, have no real *alpi ;* Griante, on Lake Como, for instance, has been squeezed out by its neighbours, and is left with only the picturesque slope of San Martino, with its little pilgrimage church—a favourite walk from Cadenabbia.

The name of this popular tourist centre is said to be a corruption of Ca de' Nauli, a dialect equivalent for Casa dei Barcajuoli; which reminds us that the hiring out of rowing boats and petrol launches—a branch of the increasing "tourist industry"—together with the steamer traffic, and handling of luggage and goods, gives a limited amount of male employment on all the Three Lakes; while the vessels laden with logs, which unload in a succession of little harbours, represent a constant and ancient form of Lakeland commerce. Nowadays these wood boats are mostly provided with electric motors; but when the wind is in their favour they thriftily resume their primitive and picturesque sails.

Last, but not least among the métiers of the Italian lakes, is that of the fisherman. The older men are fond of affirming that fish are far less numerous than when they were young; and after duly discounting this sort of reminiscence, it seems certain that the laws relating to pisciculture have been disastrously disregarded. The fishermen's toil is certainly not lucrative, but it is curiously attractive to themselves, and to the spectator. The broad boat with its over-arching hoops, upon which an awning can be stretched, completes satisfactorily the lovely composition of sky and mountain and water; and the three figures—one rowing in a circle, the other two letting down and drawing up the nets—are objects of unfailing interest. On non-fishing days we see the nets suspended in long lengths from sunny walls, or stretched on marble

steps or grassy slopes. There they are freed from kinks and creases, and carefully examined and repaired. Some of them—and these are very expensive—are of extraordinary fineness. The delicious little Agoni (*Cyprinus lariensis*) peculiar to the Three Lakes would escape through a wider mesh. The Luccio (*Esox lucius*) is another excellent lake fish. Perch, tench, and carp are abundant in certain places; and there are large trout; but it does not appear to be their custom to rise for a fly. In April and May huge pike are speared even by day; though it is, of course, at night that this mode of fishing is most sucessfully and frequently practised.

A brazier, or iron vase, filled with resinous wood is suspended to the prow, and the fish lie paralysed by the light. For the amateur, spearing forms an evening diversion fraught with a spice of novelty, with a danger of involuntary bathing, and with the poignant fascination of dim moving waters and contours half descried. And when he exchanges boat for bed, he may in dreams still rock upon the lake, and glimpse those great fishes, large as a man, with skin too tough to pierce, which, according to old *Paolo Giovio*, the historian of Lake Como, were wont to lie in glassy pools beneath the rocky walls of the coast near Lezzeno; till, wakened by the excitement of such visions, he may chance to hear, borne through the shutter laths by the warm night breeze, the faint sweet tinkle of the bells attached to floats, by means of which music the fisherfolk mark the position of the nets they have put down overnight.

CHAPTER III

THE CITY OF COMO

"Comum meae deliciae."
PLINY, Ep. I. 3.

IF a traveller who had determined to visit only one of the Italian lakes were to ask me on which his choice should fall, I should unhesitatingly answer COMO. And if he further enquired by which entrance he should approach the lake—for, like the New Jerusalem, it has four gates—I should again answer COMO, meaning this time the city whose name has been extended to the lake. The four gates are: (1) The city of Como, on the North Railway from Milan, and the State Railway Milan-Chiasso; (2) Menaggio, for those who come from Lugano *via* Porlezza; (3) Lecco, on the east arm of the lake, on the Milan-Sondrio Railway; (4) Colico, at the north extremity of the lake for those who descend by diligence down the Engadine to Chiavenna. And if he had never been to Italy before and wondered in which city he would do well to get his first impressions, I should be inclined to reiterate—COMO.

I should not justify my advice by a presumptuous affirmation that Como is the most beautiful of the lakes. The perception of beauty varies with individual taste and training, and with the accommodation of the "inward eye" which is infinitely sensitive to association, sentiment, and physical reaction.

No, not for superior beauty but for extreme *Italianità* and for superior historical importance and artistic interest do I give precedence to Como. Maggiore and Lugano have, for over four centuries, been shared by Switzerland; from Garda the Austrians have finally been ejected. Como in its entirety has always been Lombard. The Latin name of the lake—Lacus Larius—is derived, according to Cato, from an Etruscan word signifying "chief"—

Photo w enrit] [*Kilchberg, Zurich*

THE CEMETERY OF VARENNA.

On the eastern shore of Lake Como, with characteristic funeral cypresses.

highest in rank. If the etymology is incorrect it at least indicates a measure of fame when the "Origines" was written; if correct, it proves a yet more ancient pre-eminence. Within the Roman Empire Novum Comum, with its suburban villas fringing the lake, was a centre of intellectual and social life and also of commercial prosperity, being specially notable for its production of iron. Mediæval Como—Ghibelline in opposition to the Guelfic Milan—is outstanding and typical in the story of North Italian cities; in Italy's nineteenth Risorgimento the province played a leading part; and to-day Como reflects the opinions and life of the nation unadulterated by the cosmopolitanism of Rome and the ultra-modernity of Milan.

When, exhausted with a night journey and a stormy passage through the Customs of Chiasso, we reach the safe port of Como and descend to the city from the ridge on which the main station (Stazione San Giovanni) is perched, we at once step into a warm and soothing Italianity. How different it is from a grim manufacturing town, or a sleepy cathedral city of the north! Four tall chimneys belonging to the dye works are the only signposts of its great commercial activity. They adjoin the broadest, garden-bordered *Viale*, and are just below the oldest and most interesting Basilica of the ancient but active city.

The tall, impressive houses, built of great stone blocks, have wide-arched *portes-cochères* through which we catch glimpses of central courtyards verdant with palms, pot-plants, and flowering creepers. Outside shutters, painted green or chocolate, and graceful frescoed arabesques surrounding the windows or banding the different storeys, give colour to these stately buildings. They overshadow straight, intersecting, narrow streets, paved with cobble-stones, whereof the wear and tear are reduced for vehicles by a binary course of flagstones; but the thinly-shod pedestrian suffers penitential discipline, while the almost complete absence of side-walks, and the presence of automobiles and electric trams in ways designed only for the

passage of horse or mule or slowly rumbling family-coach, call for wary walking.

Squalor and opulence are never rigidly parted in Italy, and between the stately palazzi are wedged poor dark little shops. There is a sordid but picturesque wine shop where a bicchierino of *grappa*—a crude raw spirit—or a tumbler of cheap but pure *vino rosso* can be bought and swallowed by the artisan; or where our cook can procure for our table a graceful flagon with straw-protected bulbous base and narrow funnel-mouth containing excellent crimson Chianti or golden Orvieto. Opposite the wine shop is a fruit stall displaying cheap small sweet grapes, rather hard peaches, delicious purple figs, and big water melons; or, in early summer, scarlet piles of great flavourful cherries; or, in winter, oranges, apples, nuts, and minute, floured, dry figs.

Near by is a poor little drapery, scantily furnished with rolls of string-coloured calico and gaily coloured kerchiefs.

Further up the street, and exhaling characteristic odours, is a window labelled *Salumeria* or *Comestibili*, which displays several species of cheese and sausage, barrels of tunny-fish, olives, sardines, and the little dainties which the British traveller knows comprehensively as hors d'œuvres.

Beyond it again is the baker (*paneficio*) selling several kinds of bread, including rusks, and the thin crisp sticks —recommended to the dyspeptic—known as *Grissini;* but nothing which infringes on the province of the neighbouring confectioner (*pasticceria*), whose inviting but expensive cakes attract a stream of customers between four and five o'clock. Tea can be had, and nowadays it is almost invariably good, but dear; but little cups of steaming black coffee, or a bicchierino of Vermouth, or in hot weather a "grenadine" or "tamarindo"—pineapple or tamarind syrup with ice water—are the refreshments ordered by the majority of customers, who are chiefly of the fair sex.

The café at the corner, with its large glass windows, counter with a coffee machine at one end, and little marble

tables, is an exclusive male resort, and its busy times are prolonged after lunch and after dinner-times, when digestion is aided by black coffee or a glass of marsala, cigarettes, and the discussion of world or local politics.

The ironmongers are fascinating with their ingenious domestic utensils bespeaking a household use of aluminium and electricity much exceeding our own.

The luxury shops, on the other hand, are not very tempting; the art of window-dressing is little studied, and the substantial bourgeoisie of Como affect an old-fashioned frugality. The best *modistes* do not display their wares, and the famous silks, the manufacture of which occupies many thousands of persons in the province, are not in evidence. We must keep our eyes open for the inscriptions on the brass plates affixed to palatial dwellings if we would gain an inkling of the nature and extent of Como's manufactures.

An evening's row on the lake will give the traveller not only refreshment, but a grasp of the city's situation and salient features.

It is sheltered by an amphitheatre of hills, low to the south, and at the northern extremity rising to the height of 2,350 feet. This cone of Monte Brunate, scored to-day by a funicular railway and surmounted by a growing crop of hotels and villas—no longer enhances the picturesqueness of the scene; but the view from the summit is superb. The harbour, too, is less beautiful than of yore. It has been partly filled up to form the Piazza called after Como's distinguished son, Volta, the pioneer in electrical science, and marked by his statue. In the Middle Ages the harbour was protected from the attacks of rough weather or invading foes by a line of towered masonry; while in the rear the city was guarded by fortifications on yonder noticeable hill still marked by a solitary tower. Gaul, Roman, Lombard, in turn had known that he who held this hill—the Baradello is its name—was master of the city. It was the scene of fierce conflict during the ten years' war between Milan and Como. It served Frederick Barbarossa—for Como was fiercely Ghibelline—as a base

and refuge in his struggle against the Lombard League, and was fortified by him to an almost impregnable point. It was the scene of prisoners' tears and tortures. Its fortress was destroyed, like other memorials of Lombard Independence, by the Emperor Charles V.; and in the spirit of Italian Independence, in 1905, its surviving tower was restored.

The Baradello is, moreover, remarkable as a scene of Christian martyrdom—six soldiers of the Theban Legion are said to have suffered in the third century on the spot marked by a chapel—La Salvetta. Their bones repose in a church at the hill foot called Saint Carpoforo after the chief of the martyred six. The site seems to have been occupied previously by the Temple of Mercury. An interesting and affecting pagan cenotaph was built into one of the walls of the church, the nave and aisle of which date from the fifth century.

It was the first cathedral of Como, and portions of the existing nave and aisle—remnants of the earliest chapel—take us back to the days of St. Felix (379-391), first Bishop of Como, whose remains rest on the south aisle.

Felix, however, is not Como's patron saint. That distinction was conferred in 468 on the Thessalonian theologian St. Abbondio, who has given the name to many churches in the diocese, and to one close to the city, though on the further side of the Riva Cosia and beyond the old town wall. With its five aisles divided by two central lines of large round pillars and eleven outer columns, its lofty double windows and frescoed apse, its delicate exterior carvings outlining single-light windows, and great west door; its two lofty beautifully proportioned Campanili, its red tile-work decorating cornices and eaves, this spacious Lombardic Basilica is, alike within and without, singularly delightful to the eye. During some restoration in the sixteenth century the tomb of the city's patron was discovered, and his remains were then conveyed to their present resting place in the Duomo. His death, however, continued to be commemorated by a great procession up to the monastery—now a seminary—

Photo Wehrli] [*Kilchberg, Zurich*

A CATTLE BOAT UNLADING AT MENAGGIO.

The large building in the middle distance is the Grand Hotel.

adjoining the Basilica. The fortnight's Easter holiday which followed—during which all civic business was suspended—was, however, increasingly fruitful in disorder, and was on this account abolished in 1621.

Without allowing ourselves to be diverted by native suggestions to the Campo Santo—which is neither more nor less ugly than most other modern Italian cemeteries—we pass downwards from St. Abbondio to the road which leads us past the ancient city wall with its three towered gates. The central and most massive, erected in 1192, was known simply as Porta Della Torre—the Tower Gate—till the year 1859, when the Austrians hurriedly made their exit from it, as Garibaldi, pushing on victoriously from Varese with 3,000 volunteers, marched into the city by the neighbouring entrance. These two gates were at once rechristened Porta Garibaldi and Porta Vittoria.

Passing through the latter and along Corso Vittorio, we reach a church which, in spite of restoration, bears the obvious stamp of its great antiquity, notably in the decagon form of its apse. S. Fedele dates, in fact, from the sixth or seventh century, although it was rebuilt in the thirteenth. The curious bas-reliefs of the north-eastern door at once arrest our attention. One of the creatures depicted, half-bird, half-beast, resembles a pulpit carving in the basilica of St. Giulio on the island of Lake Orta. This church, at a later date than St. Carpoforo, was Como's cathedral.

Not till the end of the Trecento did the good folk of Como say: "Let us convert the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore into a Duomo which shall match any in Italy." We, who in our struggles to raise money for church building, are apt to remember only that life is short and to forget that art is long, are interested to learn how the Comaschi met the expenses of the work, which covered a period of 130 years (1396-1526). Some of their devices we, too, have tried—*e.g.*, the placing of collecting-boxes in all the churches of the diocese, and the preaching of begging sermons in Lent. Some of their methods existing British law and opinion forbid us to imitate—*e.g.*, a

State lottery, Government instructions to notaries to urge their clients to make testamentary bequests to the Duomo, or episcopal proclamations of indulgences as deferred spiritual interest on present material contributions. Other means, again, are fraught with suggestion for present and future days. Fines were diverted to the building-fund; privileges and monopolies were purchased by a promise of annual subscriptions; municipal officers and beneficed ecclesiastics were expected to make donations when accepting any fresh position; new-made burghers paid an entrance fee to the Fund; the white marble quarries at Musso, at the northern end of the Lake, and the black marble of Olcio, on the Lecco arm, were worked at municipal expense, and Duke Gian Galeazzo, the city's over-lord, renounced all impost duties on materials collected for the fabric.

By one means and another, the sums collected in the Cinquecento sufficed to raise one of the most beautiful and interesting buildings in North Italy, and one which furnishes a striking illustration of the evolution of art in the fifteenth century, and the striving and fusion of two traditions of the best type.

It has been suggested that after the collapse of the Roman Empire, a strong tradition of classic art was retained by that privileged corporation of artists and sculptors described in documents prior to the eleventh century as Magistri Comacini. Certainly the region of Italian Lakeland on either slope of the *massif*, which parts the Como and Lugano basins, has been productive of artists and sculptors of singularly pure taste and delicate invention. The Val d' Intelvi was the home of Lorenzo degli Spazi, who was responsible for the nave of Como Cathedral: Maroggia, on the northern side of Monte Generoso, was the birthplace of the three Rodari brothers, who, ninety years later, completed the fabric by the addition of a choir and two transepts, each with a rounded tribune. The centre apse was after the design of another Lombard, Cristoforo Solario, nicknamed " Il Gobbo."

The nave, with its beautiful proportions and simple

stateliness, is immune from the grotesqueness of northern Gothic: the choir has none of the lifelessness of the neo-classicism of the late Renaissance, and the fusion of the two styles is accomplished with the perfect naturalness of organic growth. The extraordinarily interesting façade was begun in 1457 by Lucchino Scarabola, of Milan, and was practically complete when Tommaso Rodari was made Master of the Fabric in 1487; yet one cannot help feeling that his master hand may have been responsible for some of its wealth of plastic adornment. Among its numerous statuettes, we note a figure on the left (the side nearest the Broletto), of a venerable bearded man in a hat, with a lion at his feet and a book in his hand. He is Cecco Simonetti, the faithful and able secretary of Duke Francesco Sforza, here figuring St. Jerome, to borrow a cinematographic phrase. He owes his position on the façade to the fact that he induced his master to permit the removal of part of the wall of the Citadel, which, beginning at the Lake shore, included the present Piazza del Duomo, and the Municipal Palace or Broletto (pronounced by Street one of the most beautiful brick and marble buildings in Italy), in order that the Cathedral might be lengthened by two piers. On either side of the central doors are two figures, habited as Humanists, which are *not* portraits, and whose originals, if their spirits ever revisit the glimpses of the moon in their own city of Comum, must be exceedingly surprised, both at the existence of this sumptuous temple, and at their association with it. On the left is Pliny the Elder, the naturalist, killed in the eruption of Vesuvius; on the right is that estimable and cultivated Roman gentleman, his nephew and adopted son Caius, who, when governor of Bithynia, wrote to the Emperor Trajan the famous letters describing the absurd but harmless practices and rites of the Christians in the province, declaring that this superstition if left alone would doubtless soon die out. Below them are little predella-like reliefs, representing scenes from their lives. The one under Pliny the Elder depicts the eruption of Vesuvius. While the figures of the

Plinies are somewhat coarse and stiff in execution, the canopies above them are reckoned by Addington Symonds "among the supreme achievements of delicate Renaissance sculpture."

A very noticeable feature of the exterior are the water conduits. Beneath the cornice of the roof, a troop of nude Atlantes, young and old, male and female, set upon pedestals, bear on heads and shoulders shapely urns, out of which the water passes to the ground. They are gargoyles, but gargoyles devoid of Gothic obscenity. They are not imitations of the antique, yet they are stamped with classic taste. Their sculptors were Bernardo Bianco and Francesco Rusca.

Wonderfully graceful, and entirely typical of the best early Renaissance, are the sculptured garlands and Christian emblems and classical motifs and young human forms decorating the doorways to the south and the north—the latter known as the "Porta della Rana" from an ugly sculptured frog, who is the centre of many curious tales; while above the western portals the wall is pierced by a rose window of rare and perfect tracery.

Within the church are many statues, but none of them can compare in modelling with the St. Sebastian in the Chapel of the Madonna to the left of the High Altar. It is usually attributed to Tommaso Rodari's own hand.

Only when sunshine penetrates the cool dimness of the nave can we see in detail the pictures by Luini, and the single canvas by his pupil Gaudenzio Ferrari, or the great processional banner of St. Alban, or the magnificent tapestries hung in two lines, the gift in the cinque cento of the Arte della Lana—the Wool Merchants' Guild.

Luini's Marriage of a golden-haired Virgin is on the north side; on the south are (1) his Madonna with Four Saints, a kneeling Donor, and an exquisite and characteristic playing Putto; (2) an Adoration of the Magi, with a lovely Bambino touching the head of a kneeling sage, and a noticeable giraffe; and (3) a tender and graceful pastoral

fantasia on the theme of the Nativity, with kneeling shepherds and angelic choir.

Placed in instructive proximity to this Nativity is Gaudenzio Ferrari's bold conception of the Flight into Egypt, with its shadowy background, its rich colouring, its arresting grouping. As in Holman Hunt's Triumph of the Innocents, the travellers are attended by a cortège, visible only to the Holy Child; but Ferrari's invisible companions are not the newly-awakened spirits of the slaughtered proto-martyrs, but a few of those "thousands of angels" at the disposal of the Christ.

One of them, a golden-haired youth, lays a guiding hand on the neck of a somewhat unconvincing ass, who carries the Virgin seated on a curious side-saddle.

Close by we notice the gilded piece of tabernacle work over the altar of St. Abbondio, which seems in some of its female figures to reflect the manner and grace of Luini; nor must we leave the Duomo without glancing at the bust of a Comasco, Benedetto Odescalchi—who, as Pope Innocent XI. was Louis XIV.'s bitter opponent, and the persecutor of Molinos—and the tomb of Benedetto Giovio, the historian, who was borne on the shoulders of noble youths to this last resting-place in the year 1544.

Posterity has, I think, special reason to be grateful to him; for in these days of little leisure and many books it is no small advantage to be told the history of 1500 chequered years in forty-three Latin words. Even translation into our diffuse, English tongue augments their number only by a dozen. The masterly epitome was made for Charles V., who visited Como in 1541. It runs thus:

"A Greek colony of Orobii were its first settlers. The Gauls took possession of it. The Rhaetians, alpine folk, destroyed it. C. Scipio, Pompeius and Caius Caesar replanted it. The Milanese, in war, burnt it. Frederick I. restored it. Civil war twice destroyed it. Princely dissensions afflicted it. Charles V. raises its hopes of felicity."

Alas! those hopes were not realized. The 179 years of

Spanish domination (1585-1714) was a period of deplorable social, commercial, and intellectual retrogression. Self-government and public spirit were extinguished; education was blighted by priestly ignorance; religious houses superseded industrial *stabilimenti*, and the nobles, who had grown rich through commerce, learned from their masters to despise it. The decrease of population was in proportion to the increase of unemployment and of taxation. And while "heresy" was severely punished, brigandage and crime were rampant and unchecked. In a word, the social conditions were those depicted in undying colours in Manzoni's "Promessi Sposi."

In the early eighteenth century Como changed masters. The yoke of the Austrians, Joseph II. and Leopold I., was light and easy, and the provinces entered supinely on an era of peace and reform, of returning prosperity, of really advanced social legislation, and of luxurious immorality; till the old order was rudely swept away by Napoleon, the prime maker of modern Italy.

When the Congress of Vienna handed Lombardy back to Austria, a change had come over the spirit of ruled and rulers. The latter did not attempt to fulfil Metternich's promise to conform their government "to Italian character and customs"; the former had glimpsed the idea of a United Italy. The flood of national feeling was already rising which less than half a century later swept the patriot Cacciatori in at Como's Porta Garibaldi.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONTOURS OF THE LARIAN LAKE

"We passed
From Como when the light was grey,
And in my head for half a day
The rich Virgilian measure
Of *Lari Maxume*, all the way,
Like ballad-burthen music kept."

TENNYSON.

WHY Virgil apostrophized the Lake as Te Lari Maxume remains obscure. The dwellers on the shores of Lake Verbano—which with a greater average breadth is ten miles longer than Como—would fain make *maxume* a substantive, and take possession of it as the equivalent of *Maggiore;* but the best scholars maintain the adjectival sense. The supposition that in Virgil's time the Lario penetrated further than it does to-day into the northern limestone ranges—a state of things of which the now detached lakes of Riva and Mezzola is reminiscent—cannot bring its area up to that of the sea-like Benacus known to modern map-makers as Lake Garda. And thus the Comaschi have much reason for interpreting the rich Virgilian phrase as a declaration of their ancient social predominance.

The odd shape of the Lario is described with singular exactness by a dialect distich:

"El nostro Lago e come on omm
G'ha on pee a Lech e l'olter a Comm
El coo a Domas."

(Our lake is like a man who has one foot at Lecco, the other at Como, the neck at Domaso.)

The man is in a thrusting attitude; his hind leg, standing on Lecco, is stretched taut; his foreleg, supported by a foot on Como, bends the knee at Argegno. He has been a majestic river to this point; now he attains his

greatest depth, while his thigh broadens. At Bellagio the limbs meet the main trunk, and somewhere about Menaggio we may endow him with an imaginary waistbelt. He now leans slightly backwards; and beyond Domaso he declines his head upon the marshy flat still called Pian di Spagni, from the Spanish fortress—the great castle of Fuentes—which once dominated it. At this northern end, where the Adda enters the lake, the surrounding mountains, extensions of the Rhaetian Alps, are towering and precipitous; they diminish gradually on either side to the stature of low hills, which, however, spring here and there into sudden peaks, as they stretch southwards. Nevertheless, nothing could be further from the truth, not only at the present time, but also in the opening nineteenth century, than the statement of Mr. Thomas Erskine, who visited the Lake of Como in 1823. "It is bounded by its two sides as by two walls," he wrote in his "Letters from Italy"; "in some cases almost perpendicular. There is not even a mule road on either side. And on one side the steepness of the rocks does not admit even of a footpath the whole way." Erksine's "Letters from Italy" was published when Manzoni was still at work on "I Promessi Sposi." In 1827 his false impressions might have been corrected by a description which is still as accurate as it is picturesque.

"Between these towns" (*i.e.*, those on the lake shore), "from the heights to the lake, from one height to another, down through the valleys which lie between, there ran, and still run, many narrow lanes or mule paths, some abrupt and steep, others level, others again gently sloping, in most places enclosed by walls built of large flints, and clothed here and there with ancient ivy which, eating with its roots into the cement, usurps its place and binds together the wall it renders verdant. Sometimes these lanes are hidden and, as it were, buried between the walls, so that the pedestrian looking upward can see naught but sky and mountain peaks; sometimes they are terraced; sometimes they skirt the edge of a plain, or project from a declivity as staircases, upheld by

[Photo: Hirth] [Kaulberg, Zurich

IN COMO PORT.

This is the "goods station" of the Lake. The passenger traffic is represented by the steamer getting up steam at the pontoon in the middle distance.

bastion-walls which flank the slopes and rise above them to the height of a parapet, so that the traveller's eye can range over fair varied prospects."

The military high-road between Colico and Varenna existed when Manzoni wrote, though not at the period in which he placed his characters; while on the opposite side of this portion of the lake runs the ancient road made in order that the Lombard Queen Theodolind might be borne in a litter to baths in the Valtelline. It was on this precipitous Strada Regina—as it is still called—that Suwaroff's Russian cavalry in the eighteenth century sustained many casualties, the frightened horses carrying their riders over the edge of the Sasso Rancio. One Russian officer is said, however, to have taken the leap into the lake unscathed. The celebrated musician Piatti, who had a villa at Cadenabbia, once, when uprooting a cyclamen below the place of peril, discovered a little bronze Russian eagle.

The tourist should not fail to tread on foot some reaches of ancient roads. The path which follows the coastline from Nesso to Lezzeno, beneath the wooded slopes of Monte Primo; the steep ascent from Bellagio to the hill where rise the twin campaniles of Civenna; the almost level track skirting the hills from Argegno to Lenno; the portion of the Strada Regina which, starting from Menaggio, leads us to the cypress-shaded plateau on which stands the Church of Santa Maria della Pace—all are easy walks. More active pedestrians should explore the romantic Val Sanagra behind Menaggio; should climb from Varenna upwards through groves of walnut and chestnut to the pastures and rocks where the village of Esino is perched; and should mount into the wide Val d' Intelvi by means of the quaint little *Filovia*—a road tram driven by electric wires—which runs from Argegno on the Lake to S. Fedele, from whence we may walk leisurely to Lanzo, a favourite Italian summer resort, or may take a two hours' ascent to the summit of Monte Generoso. The name Intelvi is said to be a corruption of d' Intelletto, given it on account of the architects,

sculptors, and painters it produced. According to Paolo Giovio it was in his day a thickly populated district, and Argegno a fortressed town of importance.

The excellent motor-road which now encircles Lake Como—and which adds another bough to the rich laurels of Italian roadmakers—has, alas, injured irreparably some of its beauty-spots. Tremezzo, for instance, can never regain the charm it possessed prior to 1906, when the old, narrow porticoed street abutted on the shore, and the waves lapped the marble stairs of the Villa Carlotta garden. But if the road has removed some of our best-loved landmarks, it has brought fresh delights within our purview. The tunnelling, balustraded *cornice* road following the western shore of the Lecco arm, which was rapidly completed as a military measure during the war, enables us to-day to visit a part of the lake which was formerly *terra incognito* to the foreigner and, further, to see something of a district renowned for its fertility, its prosperity, its exquisite pastoral charm. The Brianza, with its abundant water —it has five considerable lakes and numerous tarns and streams—its luxuriant gardens, its finely-situated villas, its picturesque farm buildings, its rich woodland and beautiful hill-forms, has been called without exaggeration *il piu deliziosa paese di tutta Italia*. The chief town of this enchanting district—Incino-Erba—can now be reached from Bellagio by a morning drive, and that not in an "auto," but in a leisurely "one-horse shay." The absence of dust and traffic contrast restfully with the emphatic presence of both around the Como arm; indeed, the writer remembers questioning the driver as to the needfulness of a *strada maggiore* upon which, in the space of two hours, no vehicle was encountered but a hay-cart. From the high plateau of Erba an electric tram takes us only too quickly through a district where "every prospect pleases" to its terminus in Como city, whence we may get a late afternoon steamer back to Bellagio.

If, instead of turning westward to Asso, Canzo, and Erba, we adhere to the new cornice road, we shall in due

time be conducted to the lake-end city of Lecco. In the twelfth-century struggle between the two great families of Torriani and Visconti, the Lecchesi sided with the former, and Lecco was in consequence besieged, taken, sacked, and razed to the ground by the victorious Visconti. The inhabitants were expelled, but gradually returned. Azzone Visconti then fortified the resurrected city and united it to Milanese territory by the great bridge across the river Adda, which here leaves the lake. The Visconti bridge had, however, but eight arches, a drawbridge completing the span. It was rebuilt by the Spaniard Fuentes, was partially destroyed by the French in 1799, and was restored by the Austrians. The seventeenth-century history of Lecco under the Spanish yoke and the abiding aspect of the surrounding country are vividly depicted in the pages of "I Promessi Sposi"; and Manzoni's statue, and the Villa Caleotto where he lived, form, for the majority of pilgrims, its main attraction. Modern Lecco is tolerably prosperous, with iron, brass, and copper works, a trade in candied fruits, and large silk mills; but it has buried too completely its eventful past to be a bourne of real interest.

Those who would see it at its best should visit it on an Easter Monday. Then its annual fair brings to it a concourse of peasants, still uncontaminated by a tourist industry, still swayed by old-time customs, who fill its commonplace thoroughfares with hilarity and colour.

Some of us, with all due respect for the extraordinary skill of Italian roadmakers, retain an opinion that the ideal method of making the lake's acquaintance was that of old Paolo Giovio, who, when writing his "Descriptio Larii Lacus" in the sixteenth century, rowed and sailed around it in a leisurely six days. An electric launch offers us the same free choice as to landing-places, with an economy in time; but it is less reposeful and in stormy weather far less safe than an old-fashioned broad-beamed boat.

A public automobile service now supplements that of the excellent steamers, which are nearly as numerous but not nearly as cheap as in pre-war days. The former

cannot be viewed as a means of seeing the lake-country; but a traveller who with maps, books, and photos has learned something of its contours, its mountain configuration, its history, and its main features, who in a word is a trained sightseer, may derive considerable pleasure and profit from a single complete or partial steamer tour. Only let him travel second-class for at least a portion of the journey. The banks stream past him as in a panorama, and the brain grows weary with the reception and registering of fresh impressions. He will find it a restful change to scrutinize the samples of the lake-side population which are penned within the narrow limits of the steamer's bows, or the covered deck, where are kitchen and booking office, which is neutral ground between the two classes of passengers. Occasionally the voyage is enlivened by music. The writer has known a piano to be brought on board, but a guitar and mandoline are the usual instruments; and the hat is, of course, handed round after the performance. Sometimes a passenger is in charge of precious merchandise; a boy has a *gerla* on his back, into which a kid is netted; an old woman fusses over a crate of cocks and hens; a forbidding man mounts guard over a packing-case, well ventilated on one side, from which issue a piggie's grunts. Demijohns of Valtelline wine are met ceremoniously by liveried hotel porters, and so are great hampers containing the *primeurs* of more southern markets. In early summer huge bales of white mulberry leaves appear on every steamer, brought from the Lombard plain for the support of the voracious *bacchi di seta*. The white mulberry is considered more nourishing for the caterpillars than the black.

A priest reciting his breviary and taking snuff is sure to be present during some stage of the voyage; and so is a woman with a multitude of baskets, from one of which she draws without delay her knitting pins, and the eternal black cotton, white-footed stocking. Admire her dexterity, and ask for whom her handiwork is destined. You will elicit many a tale of heroism and pathos. It will be told in dialect; but pantomimic gesture conveys much to

a sympathetic ear. Presently you may offer, and she will accept, your superfluous sandwiches. Many hours have probably passed since she ate her monotonous meal of polenta. She has a kerchief on her head, and wears wooden clogs; but the pretty girl with her will probably have donned a silken scarf and high-heeled shoes, and her luxuriant hair will certainly be beautifully dressed. A group of men in the Alpini uniform sit apart; they, too, will tell much to a sympathetic questioner; they watch with vague and rather puzzled eyes another male group, vehement in gesticulation, eloquent in speech. Politics are their theme, and the unsophisticated foreigner trembles lest their passion should beget bloodshed. The steamer approaches a pontoon, half of them prepare to go, and an affectionate and courteous leave-taking ensues!

Standing persistently aloof is a middle-aged man carrying a stout staff and wearing a long cloak. He has a fine head, long curling hair, bushy eyebrows and melancholy eyes, which are fixed upon the land. He might, we think, have sat to Luini or Gaudenzio Ferrari as a model for St. Joseph. Presently he makes a grave gesture of salute and, following its direction, we see a balustraded garden terrace where, against a background of dark ilex hedge, there stands a woman with a blue veil over her head. She has the face and form of a Madonna, and she holds up and towards the boat an infant, whose lovely nudity emerges from a crimson swathe.

CHAPTER V

SOME VILLAS AND CHURCHES

"By Sommariva's garden gate
I make the marble stairs my seat
And hear the water as I wait
Lapping the steps beneath my feet.

I ask myself, 'Is this a dream?'
Will it all vanish into air?
Is there a land of such supreme
And perfect beauty anywhere?"

(Poem by LONGFELLOW, published in "Poems of Places," preserved in MS. in the Hôtel Belle Vue, Cadenabbia.)

THE title of "Things Seen" must necessarily be understood in a restricted sense. To describe in detail all the natural and architectural features of the Lario, or to deal adequately with its historical and biographical associations would exceed the scope and space of this little volume; yet a selection of the features meet for observation or for revived remembrance is not an easy task for a lover of the whole district, and must in the last resort rest upon personal predilection. Hence the guarded title of this chapter.

The writer would like to mention that the leading hotels now supply useful polyglot leaflets, with indications as to walks and excursions. The tourist should ask for them on arrival. He will find in Mr. Lund's little book, "The Lake of Como," a handy, scholarly and agreeable companion. Cesare Cantù's "Storia della Città e Diocesi di Como" remains the standard authority, but it is one unhappily inaccessible to those who do not read Italian; and up to the date of writing the same must be said of the excellent Guides of the Italian Touring Club. The reader is also reminded that Street's "Brick and Marble Architecture in Italy" contains a lucid and enthusiastic account, with plans of the two famous churches of Gravedona; and that Mr. Addington Symonds has given us, in

his own masterly and fascinating style, a sketch of the extraordinary being who, in the *cinque cento*, dominated the northern portion of the lake: Gian Giacomo dei Medici, surnamed Il Medeghino, "king, brigand, liar, rebel, assassin, hero;" but none the less, own brother of Pope Pius IV., and uncle of San Carlo Borromeo ("Como and Il Medeghino; Sketches in Italy").

We shall pass the Medeghino's Castle of Musso, standing high on the hillside, and impregnable in pre-artillery days, as we steam up the lake to visit the two famous little churches of Gravedona. They stand close together on a grassy piazza near the shore, removed a little from the town to southwards, and form a lovely "bit" for the artist's sketchbook. The smaller rectangular building (Mr. Street states that its total external width is under 40 feet) is built in courses of black and white marble, quarried at Musso and Olcio. It has projecting apses on three sides, but on the fourth, the west, there is a square tower supporting a graceful octagonal campanile, obviously of later date than the tower. The date of the main building has been much disputed. Popular tradition makes Queen Theodolind its foundress—that is, assigns it to the sixth century; no expert has placed it later than the twelfth.

According to an old French chronicler, a portent was observed in the church in the year 823, when the frescoed features of a Madonna and Child, old and faded even then, glowed for ten days with miraculous light. The fresco is still shown, preserved under glass. If genuine, it goes far to confirm the popular ascription of the church to the sixth or seventh century. To the right of the High Altar three layers of frescoes are distinctly perceptible, which have been assigned by experts to the ninth, eleventh, and seventeenth centuries. An enormous Byzantine crucifix is of a yet earlier date. It is said to have been brought from Spain, is carved from a single piece of wood, and is noticeable for the draped figure of the Christ. The life of the Precursor is portrayed in the *quattrocento* frescoes in the principal apse; and to him the church

would seem to have been originally dedicated. It is still used and locally designated as Il Battistero. Since the *quattrocento*, however, it has figured picturesquely as Santa Maria del Tiglio—St. Mary of the Lime Tree—in all ecclesiastical documents. The writer conjectures that the miracle of the luminous Madonna may be responsible for this ousting of the Baptist.

The adjacent Church of St. Vincent has been rebuilt too thoroughly to show many traces of its Romanesque origin. The crypt, however, remains as a relic of the most ancient structure, and even, it is affirmed, of a yet older Temple of Venus. Two Christian inscriptions may be deciphered, of the years 502 and 508; and there is a remnant of ancient fresco on one pillar. Without, on each side of the main entrance to the church, is a very pleasing seventeenth-century cloister.

The fame and pride of San Vincenzo were, however, founded on its treasury, more especially upon a silver Pax of the *trecento*; a chalice of the *quattrocento*, with wonderful inlaying and Limoges enamel; and supremely on a silver processional cross, described by Street as "a piece of metal-work which might well make a modern silversmith run swiftly down to the Lake and drown himself in despair."

No longer is the modern silversmith tempted to suicide, and the art-loving pilgrim made happy by the sight of those exquisite carvings. On the Feast of St. Martin, 1920, four unemployed ex-soldiers quietly entered the Sacristy window by means of a ladder of twenty rungs. Two of them were natives of the place; one, it is whispered, had once been sacristan. The writer will not easily forget the tragic intensity of gesture with which an old inhabitant described the faces and the feelings of the little, expectant crowd, when their suspicions of foul dealing were verified and announced. The story is one of quaint retributions. The thieves left behind a substantial clue—a pocket-book containing the address of two of them. They proved to be men already "wanted" by the police, and in the April of 1921 were still doing time

Prof. G. H. Bryan, F.R.S.]

(1) A COUNTRY CART DRAWN BY WHITE OXEN.

(2) RIVA

Situated at the north end of Lake Garda. It was formerly Austrian.

for previous offences. But, alas! when traced and arrested, they had already broken up the inimitable and priceless metal-work that they might wrench therefrom the gems they coveted, and which they then discovered were not real after all.

Did the spirit of that Franciscus di S. Gregorio—a hamlet of Gravedona—whose name as maker was inscribed upon the cross, indulge in bitter mirth at their discomfiture?

If the spirits of the lake, in this its most wind-tossed reach, be propitious, it is pleasant to row across the lake from Gravedona to the promontory of Piona on the eastern bank, where a beautiful fourteenth-century cloister well deserves inspection. There is, however, another "lion" to be visited in Gravedona itself.

In the year 1527 Tolomeo Gallio was born of a poor fisher family at Cernobbio. Rising from one ecclesiastical dignity to another, he at length became a Cardinal and Secretary of State to the Holy See. His territorial possessions were immense; and it is pleasant to add that his charitable munificence was equal to his wealth. It was said of him that he could make the six days' journey to Rome without ever sleeping out of his own house; and on the Lake shore he possessed three stately habitations. The largest was the Palazzo del Pero at Gravedona, an immense, grandiose, square-fronted pile, towered and buttressed, rising from the margin of the waves. It was built from the design of Pellegrino Pellegrini, nicknamed Tibaldo, who came from the not far distant Val Solda (on Lake Lugano), a district almost as rich as the Val d'Intelvi in artistic associations. Though denuded of all magnificence within, its noble proportions and its series of great reception rooms fill the imagination with visions of vanished grandeur and possible restoration. In the rear is a cypress grove—a spot of perfumed shadow cooled by a splashing fountain.

Cardinal Gallio's second villa was at his birthplace—Cernobbio. It is in a very different style from the

Palazzo del Pero, though it too was the work of Tibaldo. The Cardinal left it by will to his nephew, the Duke of Vito, who bequeathed it to the Jesuit Order. On their expulsion in 1769 it had a succession of unrelated owners, by one of whom Napoleon I. was entertained there in 1803. For his use one of the rooms was panelled with yellow satin, still fresh and bright, adorned with the inevitable N's and eagles. In the year of Waterloo the villa was bought, enlarged, and re-decorated for Caroline, Princess of Wales, who for some years held in it a gay but not too reputable Court.

It must, however, be admitted that she conferred two lasting benefits upon the neighbourhood: (1) She replaced the dangerous old mule path by the lake with a good carriage road, a fact which is proclaimed by a wayside Latin inscription; and (2) she bestowed upon her residence the harmonious name of Villa d'Este. One is thankful that when this villa became an hotel, it was not rechristened Belle Vue, Splendide, or Excelsior. Hôtel Villa d'Este, with its spacious apartments adapted to modern conceptions of comfort, is one of the most luxurious on the lake; and if one must add, adopting the terminology of Baedeker, "with corresponding prices," one must also remind the reader of the great expense incurred by the management in the upkeep of the lovely grounds. Sunny paths and sheltered seats; delicious vistas and flowery foregrounds; the shadow of one of the largest sycamores in Italy; a velvety bowling green, and well kept tennis lawns; a fragrant rose garden; a stream flowing through an artificial channel down a grass slope avenued by gigantic cypresses —these are some of the delights of the park of Villa d'Este.

Cardinal Gallio's master-passion of building was undiminished by time. He was forty-one when he began the Villa d'Este, fifty-nine when the foundations of the Palazzo del Pero were laid. In his seventieth year he called upon Tiabaldo to build him a third but more modest villa at Campo; and he lived for another decade to enjoy it.

Perhaps in his old age he craved for the sun and calm of the lovely Zocca dell' Olio—the Bay of Oil—a name which, whether it refers to the oil-like smoothness of the water, or to the excellence of the olives grown on the surrounding hills, is indicative of the sheltered character of this reach of the lake. Gallio's Villa Balbiano has long been attached, as residence of the manager or possessor, to the Campo Silk Mills. At the end of the eighteenth century both villa and filatoio were owned by another prince of the Church, who was likewise a wealthy philanthropist, a cultured art-patron, and a builder. Cardinal Darini's villa on the tongue of land running out into the lake, and sheltering the Zocca from the north, was not, however, designed for his own use, but as a rest-home or convalescent home for Franciscan friars. One cannot imagine a spot more filled with subtle suggestions both of the sweetness of entire repose and of the joyousness of a return to health, than the long loggia on the promontory's crest, with its double vistas up and down the lake, or the adjoining library with the same prospect, or than sunny nooks within the terraced garden, where all sorts of rare shrubs have been tended to a luxuriant growth. The Cardinal called the rest-home Villa Balbianello, an affectionate diminutive of Balbiano, his own residence; and the name in popular parlance has adhered to it, and to the little peninsula, to the exclusion of more correct designations.

The original name of the promontory was Dosso Lavedo or Dosso d'Abido; that of the villa became subsequently Arconati. The Marchesa Arconati rarely came to it. It has recently been acquired by an American.

A great figure of St. Francis still stands upon the balustrade above the porto, uplifting holy hands to bless not only human visitants, but also surely his "sister the water." But the men whose patron he was were driven from their Eden in 1810 by Napoleon's measure of monastic dissolution.

Purchased by Count Porro, an ardent patriot, and subsequently a political exile, it sheltered for a time both

Silvio Pellico and Mazzini; and hither, too, came the like-minded "Revolutionary Princess," Cristina Trivulzio Belgioioso, rowing up the lake from her Villa Pliniana. What dreams were dreamed, what far-reaching weapons were forged, as the patriots forgathered at one or other of the two villas!

To-day, in the absence of the owners, we too may enjoy the heritage of Friars and revolutionaries. The old gardener-custode is a pleasant fellow, a true lover of his place and work, and the most courteous and unhurried of *ciceroni*.

From the modern history of Balbianello our boatman will take us in a few moments back into the days of early Christianity within the Roman Empire. As he rows us over the bay on the northern side of the promontory he will show us the spot were, when the lake is low—as it was in the rainless spring of 1921—certain stones may be descried beneath the water which enthusiastic antiquarians believe to be fragments of one of the many villas of the Younger Pliny.

With greater feelings of certainty we view the remarkable early Lombard octagonal baptistery of Lenno, pierced by deep, narrow windows set, not in the middle, but to the left of each of the eight sides; and, crossing the Piazza, plunge into the two crypts beneath the Parish Church, which experts declare cannot belong to a later date than the middle of the fourth century, and which, since they obviously incorporate the remains of pagan temples, commemorate yet more remote epochs. One is glad to know that these crypts, and the baptistery have been declared national monuments, and are therefore under Government surveillance.

High on the hillside above Lenno and Campo, at the entrance to the Val San Benedetto, is the sixteenth-century Sanctuary of Our Lady of Help. The story of its building is one that with variations is told of many other shrines. A dumb shepherd girl found an image of the Madonna in a grotto in the hills; her speech was miraculously restored that she might announce the fact; the

image was solemnly brought down to the principal church below, but always returned to its original resting-place: at length it was clearly manifest that a shrine must be built on the heights for its reception. But in fact the Madonna del Soccorso took the place of an older tutelary deity; for there seems little doubt that centuries before the edifying of the votive church, the inhabitants of that fertile district climbed to the grassy platform to do honour to the goddess Ceres.

The steep Pilgrims' Way is unsoiled by common traffic or the passage of beast of burden, and affords us exquisite glimpses of the Grignio and the lake; but its cobble-stones are as painful to the feet as penitential peas, and we halt gladly to look through gratings into the chapels, which house terra-cotta groups representing the Mysteries of the Rosary. Such pilgrimage chapels—great Bible picture-books which, in past days, must have been read greedily by the illiterate—are of course to be found in many other places in Italy; but the writer always fancies that those of the Madonna del Soccorso display greater artistic skill, a tenderer feeling, and less painful realism than is met with elsewhere.

The 8th of September, the Feast of the Assumption, of course, sees a great concourse of peasants from the surrounding villages. There are, moreover, a series of parochial processions on the Sundays after Easter. They start betimes, and after a sung Mass, the pilgrims picnic on the stone tables outside the church. We watch their descent at mid-day down the steep winding lane. The red tippets of the old guildsmen form a streak of brilliant colour. The silver-gilt of processional crosses and great candlesticks gleams where the sunlight catches it. Fitful sound waves of chanting reach us, becoming constant and insistent when the road is reached. There is a halt, a change of tour and posture. Heads are bent, and the devouter of the pilgrims fall upon their knees. A car coming from Como in a cloud of dust stops suddenly behind the procession, and some of the little lads attendant on the priest and young white-veiled maidens in the rear

are obviously distracted. But the old women in black veils are unmoved; and the white-surpliced red-caped men break again into the responses and perambulation of a litany. It is a characteristic Italian *rencontre* of modern progress and immemorial custom.

CHAPTER VI

MORE VILLAS AND CHURCHES

THE steamer pontoon, a stone's throw from the steps of San Giovanni at Bellagio, leaves us without excuse for visiting an interior which is specially pleasing from its refined and harmonious decoration. Nor would any lover of Italian art willingly forgo an inspection of the fine picture by Gaudenzio Ferrari on the south side of the building.

The instruments of the Passion are borne upwards by triumphant angels; Christ reigns, and with Him are those who have followed Him to the death, the precursor and the proto-martyr, St. Peter and St. Paul. Among the kneeling crowd—a study in costume and character—we note particularly a woman with a blue-green petticoat and golden tippet and cap, and a fine-featured fair-haired man in a rust-red cloak.

If St. Giovanni, within and without, satisfies our eyes, it also assails and charms our ears. The vibrations of its deep-toned bell, rendered more musical perhaps by their passage over water, form the sweetest of our aural memories of Como. In this reach of the lake there comes to us in still weather an antiphonal "squilla di lontano" from many campaniles; Griante, Varenna, the Soccorso, Lenno, make their responses in various tones; but through them all resound the mellow, full-throated notes of St. Giovanni. To wake on the morning after arrival to such rich cadences, swung outwards through the open belfry windows into the liquid air, is to "feel along the blood" that we are again in Italy.

We pass and note the stately cypress avenue of Villa Giulia, against which rises the exquisite Lombardic bell-tower of the disused church of Santa Maria Antica, as we row a little northwards to visit the Parish Church of Bellagio. St. Giacomo was deprived of most of its

characteristic features in previous rebuildings, but the last has been a real restoration. It has once more its characteristic windows and contour, and whitewash and worthless paintings have been cleared away. The result is a pleasing purity of line and simple severity of effect. There are remnants of ancient fresco, telling the story of St. Ursula in a small apse on the north, and on the same side a picture.

And now surely we shall continue on the steep upward *salita* to the summit of the wooded promontory which is the northernmost tongue of the High Brianza, dividing the two arms of the lake. It is a wonderful situation, this Punta di Bellagio. The Younger Pliny was too much a connoisseur in sites not to have a villa upon this "lofty ridge commanding two waters" (Pliny to Romanus, Ep. ix. 7). He called it "Tragedy," "because it is lifted so to speak, upon a tragic buskin"; but later dwellers on the spot might, perhaps, have employed the same name with a more obvious connotation. There was, for instance, a Countess Borgomanero—a sort of female Landru—who arranged that bygones should be bygones, by dropping discarded lovers from the overhanging summit into the profundity below; and robber chieftains who, from their fortressed eyrie terrorised lake travellers alike on the Lecco and the Como side, till their stronghold was destroyed by the Visconti; and the Marquis Stanga, who was allowed by Ludovico Sforza to build a princely villa on the southern slope, only to see it burnt to the ground by pirate marauders from the Val Cavargna.

The Punta was in those days a barren rock—hence Pliny's statement that his villa was "planted on rocks after the fashion of Baiae." Ercole Sfondrati, commander of the Papal troops against Henry IV. of France, first planted it with trees. For his successor, Francesco Sfondrati, Paolo Giovio wrote his "Descriptio Larii Lacus," and in the first edition of this work (1558) we find an enthusiastic editorial description of the Sfondrati villa at Bellagio, its gardens, its pure supply of water, and its descent of 800 granite steps to the lake level. From the

Photo Brunner] [*Como*

VIA SERBELLONI IN BELLAGIO.

A steep but short approach to Villa Serbelloni.

Sfondrati the property passed to the great ducal house of Serbelloni, and to that family it still belongs, though let for a term of years as a *dependance* of the Hôtel Grand Bretagne.

It is impossible to give to those who have not seen it an impression of the beauty of the Punta di Bellagio, and difficult to know in what season of the year that beauty is most splendid and alluring. M. Gabriel Faurès, in one of the most luscious and sentimental of his Italian sketches, gives his vote for the perfumed and voluptuous days when summer is slipping into autumn. The writer confesses a predilection for early February, when winter still reigns upon those glistening heights above the Splügen, which are glimpsed through a lovely frame of naked boughs, while spring already breathes through the violets at our feet. The darkness of conifers and of thickets of evergreen shrubs—laurels, arbutus, and laurestinus—is relieved by the permanent silver of the olive; the lake is a burnished mirror till the *breva* ruffles it to incandescence; the villages on its shores, and gay little pink and yellow villas on the hill slopes, seem to smile, content with the precious noonday sunshine. We, too, raised far above them, bask like the lizards against the hot stones of a sheltered wall, while we breathe a pure invigorating air and a peace upon which no tourist breaks. The great umbrella pines on the summit lift themselves darkly against a sky which is of pale but cloudless blue, until that hour when their stems redden in the light of a descending sun. Then pearly mist veils the blackness of the bare chestnut woods, and warns us to turn our steps homeward.

As to the Villa Carlotta, the goal of many tourists on the shore facing Bellagio, there is no doubt at all in which season its beauty is at its best and brightest. In the month of May and on to early June the roses and wistaria ramp up tree trunks and tumble in pink and mauve and crimson cascades over marble balustrades; the huge azaleas become burning bushes; the air is heavy with the scent of magnolia and lilies; and in the warm dusk fire-

flies dance through the mazes of tropical and subtropical vegetation, which survives the winter and bursts into luxuriance in early spring in sheltered reach of the Tremezzina.

The outward aspect of the villa, with its great double marble staircase rising to the *piano nobile*, is undeniably imposing, and within we find some noteworthy statuary.

Canova's Magdalen and Eros and Psyche have been much described and reproduced, but Thorwaldsen's great frieze is too little studied. Its subject—the Triumph of Alexander the Great in Babylon—must be viewed in relation to the fact that it was an order from Napoleon I. Before the work had progressed beyond its initial stages the Emperor—*sic transit gloria mundi*—was a captive. Count Sommariva, the then owner of the villa, took the obligation of £15,000 upon himself; but he died before the frieze was complete. His portrait, and that of the sculptor, should be looked for in the two figures bringing up the rear of the great procession.

The Count's widow sold the villa to Princess Charlotte of Prussia, who, in 1850, when her daughter married the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, gave it as a wedding present to the bride, rechristening it Carlotta. The little white rotunda chapel, giving on to a small piazza shaded by palms, was, however, excluded from the sale. In the vaults below rest the remains of the members of the Sommariva family whose likenesses are perpetuated in the marble statuary of the carefully tended little church.

Two other neighbouring villas are depositories of fine statuary. In little temples in the grounds of Villa Vigoni at Loveno—a steep but pleasant walk from Menaggio—we again meet with excellent work by Thorwaldsen, as well as with a bas-relief by Marchesi, which relates a touching tale of the Mylius family. The secluded grounds are delightful; and we may enjoy them, not as members of a conducted herd, but in peaceful solitude.

Villa Melzi, near Bellagio, has not Vigoni's natural beauty of situation; but the gardens, though a little fantastic, are well kept, and exhibit Camolli's Dante and

Beatrice, and portrait busts of Napoleon's mother and his first wife, Josephine. A portrait of the Emperor himself at the age of thirty-three is shown in the house, and a very striking *auto-ritratto* bust by Michael Angelo. Frescoes in the chapel commemorate the friendship of a bygone Melzi with Leonardo da Vinci.

We have yet to see the most interesting villa of the Lake; but it is an excursion which must be reserved for the hottest days of summer, and will repay us then with an extraordinary sense of coolness.

To reside in the Villa Pliniana in winter would be *provar pene d'Inferno*, as a Comasque distich says of another sunless spot on the same lake. Does the simile seem curious to us Northerns? Let us remember that the extreme torture of Dante's Hell is not fire, but ice. Only on midsummer days does the sun kiss the long façade of the Pliniana; and the giant cypresses rising close behind it seem to express severe and mournful disapproval of the unusual liberty. Garden terraces lift it above the level of the lake, and rise behind it into chestnut woods, shadowed by a semicircular wall of mountain rock. The "sun is silent" in the leafy depths, and all nature seems hushed to a sustained act of listening to the varied sound of cooling waters; the lap of waves upon the stairs of landing; the dash of a great waterfall from the overhanging crags; and the intermittent bubbling and trickling to the lake of the mysterious spring which is the *clou* and secret of the villa.

The portion of Pliny's famous letter to Licentius Sura (Ep. v.) in which he describes the spring and hazards explanations of its action, is writ in fresco for all to read, both in the Latin original and in an Italian translation, upon the walls of the graceful double loggia. Here the prevailing sense of shade and coolness is accentuated by a bronze *vasca* of clear water presided over by a water divinity, and is deepened by contrast with vistas of sun-baked villages on the opposite shores of the lake. Leaning over the parapet in front, we can watch the spring, which flows under the loggia, take its final leap into the lake;

while in the rear of the loggia is the rock basin into which it intermittently flows.

"You may lie near it and eat your food and drink of the spring, which is intensely cold." "Suppose you place a ring or some other object upon a dry spot. The water reaches it, at last covers it, and then again slowly retires and leaves it dry. If you watch longer you may see a repetition of the process." These are the directions given by a great Roman gentleman 1800 years ago, and we carefully obey them.

Though Pliny has impressed his personality so indelibly on the house that it has never assumed, according to Italian custom, the names of successive owners, there is nothing to show that he ever resided in that spot. His letters speak only of a little artificial dining-room receiving the spring (*coenatiuncula manu facta*), nor has local tradition ever indicated the existence of a Roman villa on the site. The Pliniana is a curiously modern house in aspect and arrangement, especially as compared with English manor-houses of the same date; but in no modern spirit was it built in the year 1570. Count Giovanni Anguissola had helped to put a violent end to the iniquitous life of Pier Luigi Farnese, Duke of Parma and Piacenza. But the loathsome Duke was son of Pope Paul III., and Anguissola lived in dread of the long arm of papal revenge. In his last years, moreover, remorse for the murder preyed upon his mind; and his deeply secluded, easily defended villa was in his eyes at once a fortress and a cell.

It is not, as visitors often believe, the crest of Anguissola which appears on a medallion on the entrance steps. The naked child issuing from the serpent's mouth is a device which was adopted by a crusading Visconti from the Saracens; and in the eighteenth century Villa Pliniana became Visconti property.

Among its notable occupants or visitors are remembered a Spanish scientist, who for forty days examined the phenomenon of the spring; Ugo Foscolo, who spent long hours in the loggia when writing his "Inno alle Grazie"; Napoleon Bonaparte, who came hither after the Battle

of Marengo; and Shelley, who was enchanted by its tragic air, by its views, "the most lovely the eye ever beheld," and by its "laurel groves which deserve the epithet of Pythian," and who endeavoured, but in vain, to obtain possession of it (whether by lease or purchase he does not state).

In the middle of the nineteenth century it is connected with the great name of the beautiful, daring, and gifted Princess Cristina Belgiojoso, the "Joan of Arc of Italy," and the original of Theodora in Disraeli's "Lothair" and of Laura Piaveni in Meredith's "Vittoria."

Her death in 1871 was mourned throughout the country she had laboured to redeem; but especially was she lamented upon the lake. Many of her gifts were inherited by her daughter, Marchesa Trotti, who, though her principal home was near Bellagio, never failed to make a summer sojourn in the Pliniana. She, too, and likewise her daughter, has now joined the majority.

So the generations come and go and have their temporary quarters within the great old houses they fancy they possess; while the mysterious spring continues, without haste or rest, to mark the passage of the hours with its punctual ebb and flow.

The *Custode* of the Villa Pliniana can only be summoned at its water entrance; though garden gates will be unlocked for guests who would depart on foot.

One other place upon the lake, and for more obvious reasons, can only be visited by boat. The Isola Comacina or San Giovanni, Como's only island, is separated from the mainland by the narrow strait of the Zocca dell' Olio. It is but a bare half-mile in length, and little over three hundred feet in breadth, but a great deal of mediæval history has been compressed into it, and great crises have hung on it. It and Ravenna were the last spots in Italy to preserve allegiance to the Roman Empire, nor did it yield to the Lombard King Autaris till it had been besieged for six months. Happily the conquerors were no longer barbarians; those associated Master Builders, the

Magistri Comacini, who had made it a city of refuge and a repository for Roman architectural traditions, found an employer and protector in the enlightened Queen Theodolind whose memory is still green around the Lake. She employed them on the Cathedral she built at Monza.

In the twelfth century the island again assumed an attitude of solitary defiance. It sided with Milan against Como; but it called in vain for Milanese aid when the Comaschi, in alliance with the little Republic of the Three Pievi at the northern end of the lake, completely invested it. After many days of fighting its resistance weakened, and its foes sacked and destroyed it. The majority of its surviving inhabitants took refuge on the nearest shore, and transferred to their mainland settlement the name of Isola.

Never, since the sack of 1167 has there been building on the island; but in the eventful year 1848 it had a population, the Austrians converting it into a prison camp for 1500 rebellious Croats. To-day, as we bask on its sunny, grass-grown banks, or glance at its solitary little church, as we talk to the peasant and his wife who are its sole inhabitants, and dive into his cowshed to view clear traces of a marble apse, we find it impossible to realize either its populous seventh-century existence or its turbulent mediæval activity; nor would we injure our impression of pervading peace by conjuring up mental pictures of this lovely Zocca filled with ships of war, and its waters running red with blood.

The Mystery Play formerly enacted on the island on the Festa of St. Giovanni Baptista has dwindled to an ecclesiastical procession followed by a fair. A barge of gorgeously vested priests crosses the Zocca; Mass is said in the little church, the strait fills with craft of various sizes and description, and the fair revelry begins. And when men have well drunk, there are wafted from the island strains of revelry which harmonize not with the festival of Him "who came neither eating nor drinking," but with the mysterious rites of ancient peoples persistently com-

memorated by the beacon fires which blaze upon the mountains on Midsummer Eve.

Truly was it said by Addington Symonds that "in Italy far more than in any other part of Europe, the life of the present is imposed upon the strata of successive past lives: civilizations have arisen, flourished and decayed on nearly the same soil."

CHAPTER VII

VALSOLDA

"Pieno di sole
E il luogo, di silenzio, e di ciclami."
FOGAZZARO ("Novissima Verba-Valsolda").

A LIGHT railway and an excellent highroad link together the two lakes of Como and Lugano. It is a route of such enchanting beauty; that it is worth while to traverse it on foot; using the short cuts between the zig-zags of the road; diverging on to the grassy uplands, shadowed by chestnuts and walnuts, to see the elaborate trenches prepared against a possible Hun rush through Switzerland; inspecting the greens of the Menaggio Golf Club; drinking one's fill of the enchanting vision of mountain ranges seen from the summit of the watershed; lingering near the little Lake of Piano, so gay with yellow flags in summer; and at length tramping downwards into scenery scarcely less lovely than that we have quitted.

The little port of Porlezza, communicating with several valleys, notably with the romantic Val Cavagna, is an excellent starting-point for lovely and unhackneyed expeditions. Most of us, however, will take steamer, and journey by it to its second stopping place, the village of S. Mamette on the northern shore, where, with its enclosure of carefully cut acacias, the little hotel Stella d'Italia beckons to us right at the landing-stage, and within does not belie its outward aspect of welcome.

It is a strangely remote region, this Italian end of the lake. The famous novelist Antonio Fogazzaro, who loved it with a deep-rooted hereditary sentiment, described its aloofness with fanciful but accurate picturesqueness; and his words are almost as true to-day as when in 1875 he penned the Preface to the collection of poems inspired by, and called, "Valsolda." It is, he declares, "a sort of hyperborean region, beyond the boundaries

Photo] [*Ballance*

CASARICO.

One of the villages "crouching on the shore" at the Italian end of Lake Lugano.
It lies between S. Mamette and Orico (see p. 57)

of the known world." Once upon a time, indeed, the pioneers of progress passed that way. "At the foot of that gigantic wall there is an abandoned gold mine: at the bottom of a ravine, full of the sound of waters, there are old workings for anthracite." "But the Valley said to the Pioneers, 'I can give you nothing.' So they nobly went away; and there settled down on the land a deeper silence." To-day "the barbarian hordes who, armed with alpenstocks, descend upon the lake, by the Mountain of the Nations" (the Gotthard) glance disdainfully at these regions from the steamer deck, "finding them unnoticed by Murray." Timid villages crouch by the lake, or hide among vines and olives, "ready, one would say, to run away at the first unusual sound"; and though these *paeselli* "are linked to each other by a network ol lanes," they are guarded from the world beyond by great "rock giants, so that when the lake rages only the birds of the air can reach them."

If some among the "invading hordes" desire to visit this region "beyond the boundaries of the known world," and are familiar with the names of its timid villages, it is due to the pen of Fogazzaro; and more especially to the charm and deep humanity of the book which is perhaps the greatest, and is certainly the most popular, of his novels, "Piccolo Mondo Antico," translated into English with the title of "The Patriot."

We cannot do less than make the tour of the principal villages of "this little old world," and if the steep lanes (*salite*) connecting them be fatiguing, there are rude stone seats and low walls which invite to halts. Starting from the Inn, we cross a bright little Piazza, whose fourth side is the lake; and, jaded by the recurrent appellations of Nazionale and Garibaldi, we note with relief that it has actually retained its original and simply expressive name "del Centro." At the right-hand top corner of this central square a steep path leads to the Parish Church, and then onwards and upwards to the village of Loggio. We note an interesting old fresco on the wall of its Town Hall, before we climb the steep shore

stairway to the terrace whence the Parish Church commands the lake. From thence a rugged lane leads inland to Puria—whose priest is introduced to us in the opening chapter of "The Patriot" as hungering for *risotto* with truffles—and continues to Castello, the home of Fogazzaro's heroine, Luisa. This is the highest and principal village of the district, and here, on this coign of vantage, once rose the castle whose name it has absorbed, and of which a few ruins yet remain.

The houses stand in a sunlit line along the summit, looking across the deep ravine whence issues the River Solda, and down upon the villages of S. Mamette and Casarico, "crouching on the shore as if in the act of drinking." With its narrow cobbled passages—one cannot call them streets—tunnelling beneath the houses and punctuated by steps, its rich odour of manure, its picturesque but unsavoury squalor, it resembles some of the Ligurian hill villages. Yet in the midst of poverty and decay there is a lovely carved marble fountain, with the usual notice prohibiting defilement of the water—for Italians, contrary to English preconceptions, are far more careful about the purity of their drinking water than are our villagers; while the spacious church, the scene of the midnight wedding of the Patriot and Luisa, would in any British or American city be considered "exceeding magnifical."

Entering it from the blazing sunshine, the eye, even before it has accommodated its vision to the spacious dimness, is satisfied by a nobility of proportion. Next we are conscious of the imposing simplicity of the big white marble High Altar with its stately silver candlesticks, thrown into relief by a background of rich red damask. Gradually we feel a warmth of colour given out by a few seicento pictures, among them a big Assumption; and finally we observe in detail the elegance, the careful preservation, of polished wood and of fine iron and brass work. There is nothing tawdry or surcharged, still less anything mean or valueless, in this village church; and if it be a festal season, the tourist will be amazed at a

display of the "excellent work" of the silversmith, in the shape of processional crosses and candlesticks.

But we shall miss the point which this description is intended to illustrate if we regard this purity of taste and wealth in artistic treasures as peculiar to Castello, or even to Valsolda. Rather it should be noted as typical of the majority of villages round the Ceresian Lake. The houses of men may be mean and decaying; the house of God is stately and is carefully restored. The streets are uncleansed; the Church—and nowadays the school—is swept and garnished. Its glory varies, of course, in kind and in degree. Down in the sacristy of S. Mamette the writer once spent an hour in reviewing the wonderful old fabrics and precious embroideries kept with scrupulous care by the *Parocco;* elsewhere the emphasis is on ancient frescoes or finely chiselled bas-reliefs and statues. But on all sides there is this revelation of a great inheritance, material and spiritual, coming down from the days when this lakeland gave birth to generations of artists in stone; artists who journeyed over Europe to execute the orders of the princes of Church and State, but whose first essays were made in their own *paese*, and who from time to time returned on holiday, and enriched the Parish Church with some specimens of their maturer powers. Such gifts were made and accepted as a matter of course, and the name of the creator was unrecorded and forgotten, while his creation was appreciated and preserved. The question Why should this Ceresian lakeland have been so prolific in genius? naturally presents itself. Unfortunately, the relation of natural surroundings to artistic achievement is a subject which has been dealt with very inadequately; but in one of the most fascinating chapters of "Modern Painters"—The Mountain Glory—we find a suggestion of interest in this connection. The uplifting influence of mountain scenery is seen as a prime factor of inspiration. But the best qualities of mountain folk spring, says Ruskin, out of their austere poverty, and poverty is a condition inimical to artistic production. He therefore concludes that life in cities or on plains *within view of*

mountain outlines is the condition most provocative of great art. Now in this lake country not only were there mountain outlines of superlative and arresting beauty, but there was also the mountain character bred of hardness of living, which was yet tempered by fertility of soil and geniality of climate; while the requisite wealth and stimulus were furnished by the proximity of Milan, where skilful craftsmen from the country continually found employment. It is surely not insignificant that the chief foci of the sacred fire were spots in which this connection with Milan, political or commercial, was closest—*e.g.*, the strip of shore beneath Mt. Generoso and Mt. Caprino, home of the brothers Rodari, and of the celebrated architects Domenico Fontana and Borromini, as also of that school of Master Masons spoken of as Maestri Campionesi, of whom the best known is Bonino da Campione, who carved at Verona the tomb of Can Signorio della Scala. And then there is Valsolda, where again and again, frescoed on the walls of public buildings, we note the crimson symbol of a cardinal's hat. An Imperial Fief, it was early donated to the Archbishops of Milan, and was only secularized under the Austrian rule of Joseph II. Would Tibaldi Pellegrino of Puria have attained, we wonder, so early to celebrity if Cardinal Archbishop Carlo Borromeo had not numbered among his titles that of Prince of Valsolda? Certainly it was no slight advantage to the ambitious young artist to be named official architect to a patron of such repute. Tibaldi, better known as Pellegrino Pellegrini, lived up to every connotation of his name, which signifies not only *wandering*, but *precious, exotic.* His wanderings took him as far as Madrid, and his pretentious preciousness of taste is unhappily illustrated in the lower portion of the façade of Milan's Duomo. But as a palace-builder he was superb.

If the influence of familiar landscape on the plastic arts has been but little observed and acknowledged, its effect on poetry and romance is patent and undoubted. No one will dispute the assertion of Fogazzaro's able

biographer that "for every poet there is a bit of country which is his soul's home," nor yet the conclusion that "for Antonio Fogazzaro the corner of this earth which made of him a poet was Valsolda." To his unpretending villa at Oria—his mother's property and the home of his creations Luisa, Franco, and their little Maria—a villa "grappled to the hillside, leaning over the lake, with its little garden sweet with orange-blossom and *olea fragrans*, from which two cypresses rose solitary and virginal skywards," the poet returned again and again, up to the last year of his life, with an increasing yearning for the repose of old familiar things.

We may descend to it from Castello by the steep path down to Albogasio, traversed in the opposite direction by the engineer Ribara (whose prototype was the novelist's great-uncle) on the dark night of Franco and Luisa's wedding. Or we may return with less exertion to S. Mamette, and from thence drive along the excellent new "auto" road; or, better still, if the lake be kindly, we may hire a rowing boat. The boat presently begins to dip and bow as we cross the spot where the River Solda enters the lake. Usually a placid stream, it becomes on occasion a furious torrent, and not a decade ago tore away the bridge which carries the road across it.

Along the shore the confines of S. Mamette pass into those of Casarico, which in their turn merge into the *paese* of Lower Albogasio. Here is the regional hospital, noticeable for its water entrance, in a cave-like hollowing of the building. From within this cave stairs ascend to the wards. A long boat, easiest of ambulances, is slung in secure readiness to the summit of the portico.

The architectural idea underlying this construction seems to recur with variation in the tall *logge*—embracing a double tier of windows so that two storeys enjoy its shadow—which are a noticeable feature of the houses of this district.

We may land at Oria just beyond the village church, which is so situated as to appear almost like an appanage of Villa Fogazzaro. The church is locked and so, alas! is

the villa door in the narrow passage which is Oria's main street, and which here tunnels beneath the first floor of the house. No strains of melody now float out across the lake from the large room giving on to the terrace, where the novelist's friends and the puppets of his fancy once made music, and the three little garden terraces, with their rose-covered balustrades and their pot plants, which the patriot in fiction and the poet's father in real life "cultivated with jealous care," have a parched and dejected air. It is almost a relief to turn to the external wall of the villa facing the church where, beneath a bronze medallion head and shoulders portrait of the novelist—an excellent likeness—is the inscription:

AD ANTONIO FOGAZZARO
CUI ADDOLESCENTE
SVELO DELLA NATURA IL DIVINO
NELLA PIANEZZA DELLA VITA
DIEDE GLORIA.
DOPO OGNI BATTAGLIA PACE
LA VALSOLDA.
IL XXIX. SETTEMBRE. MDCCCXII.

Returning to our boat, we push away from the shore in order that we may view it comprehensively.

At one end of the thin strip of village behind which the cultivated hillside rises so steeply, the distinctive landmark is formed by Villa Fogazzaro with its slender cypresses and its umbrella pine. At the other end is the larger Villa Brusati, built by a Frenchman in the days of the First Empire, and containing furniture of that period, and a large collection of prints illustrating Napoleon's victories. In 1910 this villa was sold to a retired American naval officer, who steadily beautifies the garden terrace, from which is visible an unsurpassable view of the Porlezza end of the lake, with its mountain tiers rising in infinite gradations of grey till they culminate in the lovely outline of distant Legnone. Beyond the villa is sheer and pathless rock. Italian Oria is linked to Canton Ticino

only by devious inland tracks, through high woodlands and over steep pastures. Nowadays, moreover, its remoteness is accentuated by the fact that its pontoon is omitted from the itinerary of the lake steamers. Fortunately it is but a short row across the lake to Sta. Margherita.

CHAPTER VIII

OTHER ITALIAN PORTIONS OF LAGO CERESIO

"Nothing can be as it has been before:
Better, so call it, only not the same.
To draw our beauty into our heart's core
And keep it changeless! such our claim."
BROWNING ("James Lee's Wife").

THE little quay of Santa Margherita, shaded with pollarded acacias, is a link between ancient religious art and modern engineering achievement, having on one side a small sixteenth-century church with a graceful campanile, and on the other the station of the Funicular, which ascends almost perpendicularly through a cutting in the wood to the plateau where stood the Hôtel Belvedere. It seems absurd to speak in the past tense of a substantial modern stone building, a favourite tourist resort in early summer and autumn and the scene of the opening chapters of Fogazzaro's romance, "The Poet's Mystery;" and to come unprepared upon its site, to see the well-known chestnut-shaded terrace, with its stone seats and tables, backed merely by a bare cement platform, was to feel suddenly like a ghost revisiting familiar yet altered terrestrial scenes.

Reassuring information was supplied by a friendly carabinier: the Signori doubtless knew that the hotel had never been a financial success; the season was too short. The company could not weather the dead time of the War, and was glad to accept a fair offer for the stone, lead, and fittings. So lock, stock, and barrel, the building had been removed. Our informant added significantly that the concrete foundation would have formed a fine gun emplacement; and he launched forth into facts concerning the entrainment of Italian guns upon the Gotthard line, and into hearsays as regards Swiss spies, and gave us a general and uncomfortable *apperçu* of the economic war-time isolation of this end of the lake, and of neighbouring

Prof. G. H. Bryan, F.R.S.]

LAKE OF LUGANO.

A September evening on the Lake of Lugano, with the characteristic mass of Monte San Salvatore.

hostility and suspicion—of which passport worries remained for long a memorial.

The Swiss frontier is conterminous with the fringe of the hotel grounds, the line of wire hung with bells running close to the Belvedere summerhouse, visited for its far-reaching panorama. A flight of steps, descending almost perpendicularly to the shore, has here been cut for the convenience of the customs officers, who, even in pre-War days, seemed absurdly alert. They were, however, often overmatched—to the amusement of both parties. Not only would a bevy of youths and maidens sit on the Helvetian side of the line, ostentatiously consuming the cheaper sugar they had bought in Switzerland, but the writer once witnessed the stratagem of a crafty old dame when returning from marketing at Lugano. She was met by a tribe of real or adopted grandchildren; and, squatting by the path, she produced some paper from her *gerla*, divided a chilo of sugar into minute portions, and made them each a "present." But the paper screws were returned to the *gerla* as soon as the frontier was safely left behind.

From the Funicular station we may proceed along the high plateau to the village of Lanzo d'Intelvi, an excellent centre for walks; or we regain the lake shore and the lake steamer by the steep but shaded carriage road which, before the railway was made, was the regular approach to the Belvedere, and which terminates at Osteno.

Osteno is the proud possessor of an *orrido*—a narrow, water-hollowed gorge. We may be ferried in a little boat to the end of the tunnel where the stream tumbles into it, and where, on a warm day, the refreshing sound of the fall, and the cool light filtering from above through green foliage, make the Orrido anything but horrid.

Mr. Baghot justifies a flagrantly superficial chapter in his letterpress for Miss Du Cane's charming sketches of the Italian lakes by a plea that the major part of Lake Lugano is politically Switzerland. How comes it, then, that he dismisses the Italian portion in a curt and uninforming

paragraph? He does not mention the Belvedere, still less the *terra incognita* of Valsolda; nor does he allude to two other detached bits of Italian territory—*i.e.*, (1) a strip of land on the western arm of the lake stretching between Porto Ceresio and Ponte Tresa, and (2) the little *enclave* of Campione.

The first, lying at the back of the curious promontory, which divides the Ceresian lake into two unequal halves, and of which Mount Salvatore is the terminal excrescence, was not long since a district even wilder and more remote than Valsolda; but it is now linked to the World at both ends by electric railways, and from Porto Ceresio Milan can actually be reached in eighty minutes.

Though rather bare and tame in itself, this bit of Italy commands a view across the river-like lake of a very lovely bit of Switzerland. The Collina d'Oro—the Golden Hill—as a true popular instinct has named it, is a country presenting a tempting abundance of corn, oil, and wine, especially wine, and an aspect in the mellow days of autumn which recalls the glowing landscape backgrounds of the great Venetian masters. Further south, at the extreme point of the wedge of the Arbustera, the eye is arrested by an extraordinarily picturesque group of buildings, lined up on a rocky platform. The Sanctuary of the Madonna del Sasso, with its lofty campanile, the octagonal Chapel of St. Anthony on the other side of its piazzale, and the long, narrow cypress-girt Camposanto somehow conveys a bizarre and Eastern impression. A stairway of 300 steps connects the Sanctuary and graveyard with the village of Morcote, straggling along the narrow strip of land between cliff and lake, where rows of primitive boats and yards of suspended or extended nets announce the principal trade of the inhabitants.

It is difficult to say whether the view of Morcote, or the view from its camposanto is the more striking, especially at sunset. The church, moreover (of the *quattrocento* with *seicento* additions), with its ancient frescoes and its fine statue of the Madonna by the Rodari, is well worth inspection.

Italian Portions of Lago Ceresio

After leaving Morcote the steamer stops at Melide, also on the promontory of Arbustera; and then, telescoping its funnel, it dives beneath the bridge which carries the railway line to Milan. It then steers a straight course for Campione on the southern shore.

And Campione is Italian! We know it the moment we set foot on its pontoon. All sorts of subtle messages to hearing, sight, and smell proclaim its nationality. The gestures of women washing, the verve of the boatmen, the arrangement of the cafés, the pleasant courtesy of its shopkeepers—all combine to differentiate it from the Ticenese villages. Yet its territory consists of only two kilometres stretching along the shore; and it has long lived in close amity with its neighbours, in bygone days furnishing soldiers to the Army of the Confederation, and still sharing rights of forestry and pasturage and maintaining an economic understanding which eliminates customs and passport formalities.

The history of this minute Italian *enclave* is a study in conservatism. It was originally bestowed as an Imperial fief on the Convent of St. Ambrogio in Milan. To St. Ambrogio it belonged till the suppression of the monasteries by Bonaparte; after which, on Candlemas Day, 1797, a Commissary of the Cisalpine Republic and two officers planted a tree of Liberty surmounted by a Phrygian cap in its Piazza.

From Napoleon's fall onward the history of Campione has been that of the rest of Lombardy, and it has steadily resisted "all temptations to belong to other nations." Ecclesiastically it adhered to the Diocese of Milan, retaining the Ambrosian Rite, till the year 1914, since which date it has belonged to the Diocese of Como. Its fine Parish Church shows many traces of the *quattrocento* work of those skilful master-masons known collectively as Magistri Campionesi; to their memory a monument has been erected opposite the important ceramic factory—which we may surely regard as the last refuge of the plastic genius of this remarkable *paese*.

We must not quit it without viewing the Church of the

Annunziata, situated at the extreme western edge of its territory, and we should if possible make this visit by boat. The road is a back-door approach, whereas the water entrance is theatrically imposing. The whole structure was indeed obviously designed to impress the pilgrim nearing it from the lake, which it dominates from a high terrace. A little harbour shelters the boats of the devout; and from thence ascends a double, balustraded staircase, the stairs meeting on four successive landings. On either side of the lowest a great cypress stands sentinel. Beneath the staircase are two grottoes, one above the other. Once they supplied pure water to thirsty pilgrims; now, overgrown with green ferns, they still give refreshment through the eye.

Viewed as the culminating point of this stately staircase, the highly ornamented baroque façade is triumphantly effective; but the elaborate stucco-work and pompous painting of the same period decorating the interior leave us uninterested. On the south wall of the nave, however, there are eleven frescoes of a different character and epoch, which, thanks to the observation and exertions of a Milanese artist, have recently emerged from three centuries of seclusion. They tell the story of the Precursor with originality and vigour, and show in the expression of the faces and the treatment of the drapery a master hand. The modelling of the heads in coloured stucco forms a curious feature of these frescoes, assigned by experts to the *trecento*.

On the outside of this same south wall, sheltered by an open aisle or portico running the whole length of the church, are two more series of frescoes. The earlier, a Last Judgment, shows the influence of Pisanello (1397-1455); the second that of Leonardo. Readers of German who are interested in these frescoes will find them carefully described in Rudolf Rahn's "Wanderungen im Tessin."

The territory of Campione ends a few yards beyond this church on the one side, and on the other a few yards along the path to the Swiss village of Caprino, notable for its great rock wine cellars, where the delicious wines of the

Collina d'Oro are stored in great casks behind strongly barred doors. In the time of vintage we see lines of boats laded with great vats of wine moored to the shore. The contents are conveyed to the caves in long wooden tubs borne on the shoulders of carriers, who tip them over their heads into the great barrels. A glass of wine at the popular little restaurant is no bad conclusion to a day's sightseeing; and then from the quay near by we may take one of the electric launches, which, from spring to autumn, ply at regular and frequent intervals between Caprino, Gardria, and Lugano.

And Monte Generoso? Must it not be placed in the Italian portion of the lake? The railway which has seamed it, since 1890, and the mule path by which tourists formerly reached the Bellavista Hotel, built in 1867 by enterprising Dr. Pasta, are certainly on its Ticenese side; but the frontier line passes along its serrated crest, and on the south it slopes to Italy. Moreover, the township Capolago, in dialect Codelag, where the cogwheel railway starts, has played an important part in modern Italian history. For here, in 1731, was established, by joint Ticenese and Italian enterprise, that Helvetic Printing Press through which, in the days of Austrian oppression, Italian historians and patriots—Sismondi, Massimo d'Azeglio, Balbo, Gioberti, Mazzini, and many others—spoke winged words to their compatriots.

Ticenese railway companies and hôteliers conspire to make a long day on Monte Generoso, punctuated liberally with refreshments, a feasible and enjoyable expedition from Lugano. Nevertheless, the tourist who is not pressed for time should bear in mind that the joy of an ascent through the flora of many seasons, starting with leafy chestnut woods, passing to beechwood scrub spangled with the pale gold of laburnum and the silver of wild cherry and hawthorn blossom, among upland pastures enamelled with columbines and cowslips, pheasant-eye narcissus and blue scabious, and finally arriving at rocks heavily patched with the ultramarine of gentians and lightly streaked and powdered with rosy-tipped

ranunculus glacialis, and yellow auriculas and purple saxifrage, can only be tasted fully by him who, eschewing "progressive" locomotion, falls back on the almost obsolete independence of "Shanks' mare." And, again, it should be remembered that Monte Generoso does not yield herself entirely to those who visit her only by day. An early June night, when we watch a gentle slumber settling down upon the lake and its encircling villages; when the suspended life of the populous Lombard plain is gently shrouded by a pearly mist; when the stars look like big fiery balls suspended to a deep blue canopy and ready to fall into the still waters sheer below, while the silent woods echo with the note of nightingales, is an experience fraught with satisfaction to every lover of nature.

The view which the first whiteness of dawn begins to reveal has been depicted once and for all by the gifted author of "Sketches in Italy." Few travellers can hope to behold a repetition of the curious "Brocken Spectre"—the magnified reflection of his own form on a sheet of vaporous mist—which Mr. Addington Symonds vividly describes in the sketch on Monte Generoso; but to all he offers the magic spectacles through which he has himself surveyed the more constant though ever-changing phenomena of "Mountain Glory."

CHAPTER IX

THE CITY OF LUGANO

"Stretched in never ending line
Along the margin of a bay."

WORDSWORTH.

LUGANO joined the Swiss Confederation in the sixteenth century, and at the close of the eighteenth was steadfast in its resistance to French aggression. To-day, after long rivalry with Bellinzona, it is recognized as the principal city of the Canton of Ticino, or Tessin. German-Swiss is the prevailing tongue in its shops and offices; and its innumerable hotels and pensions, and many of its villas, have a cosmopolitan population with a German preponderance. Officially, however, it is Roman Catholic in religion and Italian in language; and Italian it assuredly is in its oldest architecture and associations, in its landscapes and in its vegetation.

Few European cities have a more agreeable and salubrious climate, or a lovelier situation; and though we may regret, we can scarcely be surprised that, starting from a little old-world core of arcaded cobbled streets, and steep, stained passages, it should have extended itself around the shore to both points of its bow-shaped bay, and inland along the valley of its little river, the Cassarate, and up the hill at its rear to the level of the Gotthard line, which has so greatly developed its resources and augmented its population.

There are three spots in the city which the tourist—even if his sojourn be one of a few hours—should endeavour to visit—the Cathedral, the Public Park, and the old Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli. All are thoroughly Italian in character and associations.

The Cathedral Church of San Lorenzo is situated on a platform high above the Old Town, accessible from it, in these degenerate days, by a funicular tram. It is often entirely overlooked by the blind followers of Baedeker,

who devotes to it a curt four lines; yet its façade is placed by many distinguished critics among the very finest productions of the early Italian Renaissance. The carvings surrounding the three great portals exhibit a rare wealth of imagination expressed with extraordinary grace. The central door is usually attributed to Andrea Bregno, a Lombard; the lateral ones to Pedoni, a sixteenth-century Luganese; though other experts believe they see in them the master-hand of Rodari—who certainly enriched the interior of the church with the marble tabernacle with gilt doors which we find at the end of the left aisle. A tablet on the first western pillar of the nave records the Cathedral's restoration between 1905 and 1910. The restoration may not be to our taste in all its details, as, for example, the frescoing of pillar-bases in black and white squares suggestive of linoleum; but we feel its thoroughness, its reverent care, and its right to be described as "a worthy Swiss-Italian monument to our ancestral faith."

The general effect of the church is rich and impressive, and the dim light dispenses us from the attempt to examine details. On bright mornings, however, we may note the fresco by Morazzone in the first chapel on the right; and the Chapel of Our Lady of Grace, to the right of the High Altar, rich in marbles and gilding, with a *seicento* altar-piece, is at all times tolerably visible.

Leaving the dimness of the interior for the clear sunshine of the outer terrace, our eyes fall on a mass of old red roofs, and travel over them to the blue lake, here at its widest, pent by the great dark wall of Monte Caprino. To our left is the valley of the Cassarate, running northwards beneath the heights of Monte Camoghè, with its double peak, and the oddly serrated edges of the Sasso Grande, and the lower, nearer shape of Monte Brè, green to the summit. Smiling villages with gay villas and arrowy campaniles nestle cosily among the leafage on the lower hill-slopes. The lovely harmonies of the scene would be almost monotonous but for one feature, bizarre and arresting. It is the dolomite rock of S. Salvatore,

Photo] [*Ballance*

MARKET DAY IN LUGANO.

These ancient porticoed streets represent the nucleus of the large and spreading city.

which gives distinction of outline and fine effects of chiaroscuro to every lake-vista about Lugano, more especially in the afternoon, when it throws a deep shadow on the water, while the slopes of Monte Brè are still bright and glowing.

Less than two years after the Luganesi had restored their Cathedral they acquired their public park. Previous to 1912 the fine promenade, following the contours of the bay, came to an end a little beyond the principal quay; and the traveller on steamers bound for Porlezza glanced enviously at the green umbrageous lawns of an enclosed park stretching to the water's edge, and noted, through vistas of fine trees, a low white villa. The villa stood on the site of a feudal castle, from which the adjacent piazza borrowed its name, *di Castello*, which, in 1898, in an access of enthusiasm for Cantonal freedom, it exchanged for *Independenza*. The new name accorded well with the old villa, for the Brothers Ciani, its half-Italian owners in the early nineteenth century, were fervent workers for Italy's Independence; and their villa was a refuge for many a patriot " wanted " by the Austrian police.

The hope of the Luganesi, that the Cianis' descendant, Dr. Galbrini, would bequeath the villa with its grounds to the city was disappointed. But after lengthy and intricate negotiations, it was purchased by the Municipality at the price of 20,000 frs. The grounds extend as far as the Cassarate; and by the brink of lake or river one finds, even on the hottest summer day, both shade and breeze. The house has been converted into an important historical museum. Particularly noticeable are the rooms arranged as Ticinese peasant interiors of the eighteenth century—furniture, kitchen, and eating utensils all being original.

Among the treasures of the Museum in Villa Ciani are some coloured prints which show us the aspect of Lugano in the eighteenth century, and enable us to picture it at a much earlier date. There is the Old Town, whose aspect has altered so little, linked to the San Lorenzo platform by a single street. There is the green hill above it; and

there is the beautiful unchanged curve of the bay, along which are sprinkled a very few dwellings, and among them a long, low building and ancient tower. It is the Convent and Church of St. Mary of the Angels, dwarfed and cramped to-day by the propinquity of monster hotels, but wearing a dignified if modest aspect in a once free space of trees and pastures.

In the year 1529 the Lombard painter Bernardino Luino lodged in this building, and on the wall of the church which parted the conventual choir from the parochial nave he painted his last and largest masterpiece.

It is useless to try and see this immense picture of the Passion on a dull day, or after two or three o'clock; and it is very advisable to study a good photograph of it beforehand, if possible, with a magnifying glass. We shall thereby be enabled to realize, before we confront the picture itself, an arrangement which may otherwise in the dim light be hopelessly confusing, namely the superposition of the immense central subject of the Crucifixion on a background in which the previous incidents of the Passion are depicted in smaller proportion. The wealth of detail is immense, and every figure is interesting as a study either of character or of contemporary costume.

Luini represents the great tragedy as already accomplished. The robbers, too, have given up their ghosts, which are represented as tiny naked things, embraced respectively by an angel and a horned friend. Most striking of the groups below the crosses is that of the sorrowing women. The Virgin, clad in blue and green and gold, her face drawn and lined, falls fainting. The Magdalen, instead of being a semi-nude figure, kneeling or recumbent, gazes up at her Lord, with her back to the audience. Her grey gown reaches high to the throat, and covers the wrist; yet her attitude, her hands, the poise of her little head with its bound but rippling golden hair, give us a sure impression of her beauty. Special notice must be taken of the striking figure of St. Roch, depicted with St. Sebastian below the principal subject; tradition makes it a portrait of the artist.

After the strain of contemplating this vast representation of sin and suffering, it is a relief to turn to a Lunette—it formerly surmounted the door—in which the painter depicts the Virgin as a happy mother embracing two happy children, a little St. John, clad in sheepskin, and a dimpled, naked Holy Child, roguishly bestriding a lamb. The date, M.D.XXX., which appears on the picture makes it almost certain that this lovely variation on the chief theme of the greatest Italian masters was Luini's last work.

Innumerable are the walks and excursions to be made from Lugano, and every hill and lake village offers us some view of enchanting beauty, some "bit" of picturesque architecture alluring to the artist, or some treasure of ancient art left in the parish church by a forgotten genius or a native of European fame. Nor can we accept Mr. Baghot's curt and scornful dismissal of these villages as spots to be viewed only "at seasons when luxuriant foliage conceals their squalour," a squalor which he attributes to drunkenness and frequent religious *feste*.

Religious *feste* play but a small part in the post-War lives of the inhabitants of either Switzerland or Italy. Drunkards may doubtless be found here as elsewhere; and in the time of vintage there is usually a surplus of hilarity. There are dead and close seasons, too, in the lives of fisherfolk and husbandmen. But no one who has watched the field labour of these districts, often continuing without intermission, in spite of broiling heat, from dawn to dusk, or who has conversed with representative inhabitants—the postmaster, the parish priest, the tavern-keeper, and the schoolmistress—can believe in a general habit of idleness. Industrial life in small factories, so obvious round Lago Maggiore, is almost entirely lacking on Lago Ceresio; but the cessation of emigration from the villages within easy reach of Lugano indicates that the inhabitants find employment in the city.

Two hill villages near Lugano must find a mention in this little book on account of their peculiar *Italianità*.

The City of Lugano

Tesserete is the terminus of the electric line which starts outside the Gotthard station, and links together the villages on the west side of the Cassarate valley. Its big church stands on a hill, and the tall twelfth-century bell tower is a noticeable feature of the surrounding landscape, and as such figures on innumerable picture postcards. It is, moreover, an outward and visible sign of inward distinction and ecclesiastical pre-eminence. For Tesserete is the head or chief of the group of parishes known as the Pieve Capriasca, which form an *enclave* appertaining to the Arch-Diocese of Milan. It adheres to its Ambrosian rite, and its Lent begins four days later than that of its Roman neighbours. A Carnival dance given in Tesserete on that Saturday which, in the diocese of Lugano, is the first Saturday in Lent, is a function very attractive to the surrounding populations!

Very lovely is this hill country, in which open pasture lands begin to encroach upon richly beflowered lanes and beechwood scrub, and each of the many paths which radiate from Tesserete would furnish us with fresh and vivid impressions of the fullness of life and the luxuriance of vegetation on the southern slopes of Tessin. But our goal and timetable are fixed. We must needs reach the village church of Ponte Capriasca while the sun is still overhead, or we shall have difficulty in seeing its great copy of Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper. Whereas the Milan original is to-day only "a faded stain on a decaying wall," this contemporary copy retains all its pristine freshness. We know comparatively little of the band of Lombard pupils and admirers who were fascinated by Leonardo's titanic genius; and we are uncertain by which of them this copy was executed. A study of the well authenticated copy by Marco d'Oggiono in the Diploma Gallery at Burlington House, London, leaves us disposed to contradict the assertion that the Ponte Capriasca copy is from his hand. He was a disciple whose individuality was overwhelmed by that of his master; while the Ponte Capriasca painter had the daring independence to introduce alterations into Leonardo's "upper room." There are

differences in table appointments and furnishings, but the great change is the deletion of the third central window, which Leonardo uses as a luminous background for the figure of the Saviour, and the filling of the remaining two windows with distant symbolical views—to the right the agony in the garden, to the left the sacrifice of Isaac. The introduction of these delicate fanciful landscapes suggests in the mind of the writer an attribution of the picture to Cesare da Sesto.

The Ponte Capriasca copyist, whoever he may have been, has a strong claim to the gratitude of posterity, for by the careful labelling of the Apostles, we are certain of the identity of each of these wonderful figures, who indubitably perpetuate not only Leonardo's strong conceptions of their characters, but mediæval traditions as to their respective dresses, colouring, and physical peculiarities.

CHAPTER X

THE NORTHERN END OF LAKE MAGGIORE

"I call the Lago Maggiore district the Eden of Italy; for there are no solfataras there, no earthquakes, no pestiferous marsh, no fever-striking sunshine. Purest air, richest earth, loveliest wave, and the same noble race that founded the architecture of Italy at Como."—RUSKIN ("Praeterita").

THE journey from Lugano to Maggiore may be made most satisfactorily by means of the light railway, constructed 1885, which starts from the level of the Federal Station. It follows the depression which so nearly makes the Peninsula of Arbustera into an island, skirts the melancholy yet charming lakelet of Muzzano and the smiling Collina d'Oro, rounds the extremity of Ceresio's westernmost claw, and continues to the little bay sheltering the Swiss and Italian villages of Ponte Tresa. War-time relations between these two villages have always been peculiarly delicate and strained, inasmuch as many of the Swiss possess fields and vineyards within the Italian confines, to which of course, they are denied access. We and our porter walk across the long bridge over the Tresa, which sunders, unites, and gives its name to the villages, and endure at both ends of it a leisurely examination of our baggage and our passports. On the Italian frontier another light railway, with very comfortable carriages, awaits us, and in it we follow the course of the Tresa till it flows into Maggiore beside the busy little town of Luino.

For a brief period in the sixteenth century Luino was Swiss; but the Confederation, bent on pushing southwards, handed it back to Milan in exchange for Chiasso and Balerna. It is now of considerable industrial importance, not only on account of its silk mills, but because the commerce of four converging valleys finds in it a centre and an outlet by the Bellinzona-Genoa line. Its only "sight" is the Church of S. Pietro in Campagna, where

are some badly preserved frescoes by its famous son, Bernardino Luini; it is, however, a good centre for long excursions, and the northernmost, Swiss, portion of the lake may easily be visited from it within the day. Locarno, the principal Swiss town, is emphatically one of those places which may be described, in the language of Baedeker, as "suitable for a long stay," but which, nevertheless, may be seen thoroughly in a few hours. Its excellent climate makes it a most delectable resort in winter and spring; but while the walks, long and short, in the country behind it are of infinite variety and beauty, its "lions" are by no means numerous. Some fine *seicento* houses, with *logge* and porticoes, together with the partially demolished castle of the Visconti, which in 1502 held out triumphantly against 10,000 Swiss besiegers, and which is now a law-court and prison, remind us of its mediæval importance. The crypt of the twelfth-century Parish Church of S. Victor is a witness to its antiquity; and some fifteenth-century frescoes in Sta. Maria in Siloa will interest the connoisseur. And then, to complete the whole duty of tourists, we have but to take a ticket for the cable railway which since 1906 has supplemented the steep old shady "Way of the Chapels," and ascend to the famous and very picturesque Pilgrimage Church known as the Madonna del Sasso.

The often reproduced painting of the Deposition by Ciseri must be visited; and the views both here and from the higher Chapel of the Santissima Trinita dei Monti (1,325 feet) will certainly detain us, both on account of their varied beauty and for the complete idea they give us of the interesting geography of the northernmost bay of the lake, where the deltas of the rivers Maggia and Ticino are confronted. On the southern bend of the Maggia delta the massive tower of the Castle of S. Michele is a memorial of the once strongly fortified little town, whose life and wealth now centre entirely in the cultivation of its rich soil. Those to whom domestic architecture appeals should not fail to visit it, as it contains two extraordinarily beautiful houses, Casa Borrani and Casa

Maggetti; while others, more interested in physiological and psychological problems, will scale the sunny height behind the town, where a group of chalets in extensive grounds constitute the well-known vegetarian and Nature-cure establishment, which has borrowed from its site the flattering title of Monte Verità.

The last Swiss town on this sheltered and fertile shore is Brissago, marked by its two green islands, with their luxuriant vegetation, and by a group of immense spiry cypresses rising near the church. Its economic life centres in a tobacco factory—a circumstance which possibly helps to provide excitement for the Customs officers who watch for smugglers on both shores of the frontier torrent Valmarra, as well as upon the torpedo boats stationed below the first Italian town, Cannobio.

Cannobio is one of the most picturesque and least visited towns upon the lake, though a new motor service from Pallanza is now enlarging its commercial and tourist communications. Its superficial aspect of poverty is fallacious, for its inhabitants are quiet, shrewd, industrious folk, though possessed, perhaps, of more grit than enterprise. Their conservatism of temperament is evinced in all sorts of curious ways, as, for instance, their resolute refusal to abandon the Ambrosian rite, though they were transferred from the diocese of Milan to that of Novara as long ago as 1817. So, too, in spite of a little cleansing and modernizing, Cannobio retains unchanged its weather-beaten towers, and its houses with dark stone roofs and outside stairways and entrances on an upper floor, and many other inconvenient but characteristic features of a mediæval Italian town. The first impression conveyed by its massive, unsheltered, rough stone landing-stage deepens as we pass through its narrow, tortuous streets, and is confirmed when we reach the great, granite, arcaded Palazzo Communale, constructed in the fourteenth century, and locally named Parasio.

Under these ancient walls we shall do well to survey once for all the broad outlines of the history of the whole district.

Photo] [*Ballance*

LESA.

This porticoed street is characteristic of many ancient towns and villages in Italian Lakeland. Lesa was once the chief town of the 36 communes of Vergante—the district between it and Baveno.

Northern End of Lake Maggiore

The earliest settlers on the shores—or rather the slopes above the shores—of Maggiore were Celts who descended on the lake by the Val d'Orsola. Then came the Roman legions, the founding of military stations (Brissago, Pallanza, and Arona were especially important), and the government of the Province of Claudiana by a Proconsul.

The tradition of that unity was continued by the Carolingian *County* of Angera, composed of Locarno, Brissago, Cannobio, Pallanza, Massino, and Angera; but the growth of feudalism brought disintegration, and the rise and rule of powerful families. After a brief season of independence in "the age of the Communes," there settled down upon the lakeside populations the misery of Guelph and Ghibelline faction warfare. At Cannobio disorder reached a climax, not in some romantic episode, such as the Brigandage of the Medeghino, but in the ugly tyranny of the five Ghibelline brothers, Mazzarditi, butchers by trade and nature, whose strength lay in their union and their unmitigated ferocity. Their island strongholds off Cannero, called Castelli di Malpaga, since they were built by forced labour, are the picturesque memorial of a sordid incident. Their reign of terror actually lasted eleven years; but in 1414, after a six months' siege, they were reduced to submission, and their castles to ruins, by an armed force despatched by Duke Filippo Visconti.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century the older lakeside unity began to return under the beneficent power of the Borromean family, which from their original fief of Arona spread northwards as far as Cannobio. The whole of Maggiore passed through the unhappy phases of Spanish and Austrian domination; but in 1743 it was broken into three portions. The head of the lake was recognized as Swiss; the east bank, from Luino, remained Lombard and therefore Austrian, and the western shore was assigned to the Sardinian King. In due course a Tree of Liberty was planted in every Piazza, and Lombardy and the Novarese became part of the so-called Kingdom

of Italy. On Napoleon's fall the one was handed back to Austria, the other to the House of Savoy.

In the epic of the Risorgimento these Piedmontese villages played a great part, and nearly every one of them has its monument recording some picturesque act of sacrifice. That of Cannobio is a lion carved on a rock above the lake, commemorating the assault of Austrian warships on May 29th, 1859.

Though the streets and dwellings of Cannobio do not in many respects correspond with modern notions of hygiene, the town has a particularly good health record, thanks presumably to its dry soil, its purifying breezes, and its five great fountains, brimming over night and day with the purest of hill streams. It is, perhaps, to this excellent water supply that Cannobio owes its immunity from epidemics, notably from the great North Italian plague ravages of 1523, 1575, and 1623, so fatal to other populations on the lake. Local piety, however, attributes this preservation to another cause—*i.e.*, to the possession of a miraculous little picture. This small parchment-covered board, on which was depicted the dead Christ between the Virgin and St. John, hung in the year 1522 in a humble private dwelling on the shore. In the January and February of that year it was declared that the figure of the Crucified exuded blood. A poor little church was speedily erected over the favoured spot, but in 1571 Archbishop Carlo Borromeo gave his consent and aid to the erection of a more sumptuous temple. The beautiful design of his favourite architect, Tibaldo Pellegrino of Valsolda, was, however, only partially carried out, and was then marred with barocco over-ornamentation. Yet with its façade of Baveno marble and its Bramantesque cupola this Church of the Pietà is undeniably an imposing building, perhaps the most noteworthy on the lake, with the exception of the Madonna di Campagna between Surna and Pallanza, built at the same epoch under the same archiepiscopal auspices. Both churches have now been declared national monuments.

For the stranger the *clou* of the Church is not the

miraculous Pietà, which, covered by a sheet of chased silver, occupies the usual position, a tabernacle on the High Altar, but rather the great picture by Gaudenzio Ferrari (1471-1546) which hangs above it. Its subject is the Meeting of Christ and the Marys on the road to Calvary. The Saviour falls beneath the weight of the cross, the Virgin beneath a load of grief. Brutal soldiers, suffering women, Roman officers on horseback, curious spectators, are presented with poignant vigour in the closely packed, yet not confused, composition. Even though the light is poor we notice the perfect preservation of the deep and brilliant colouring. The picture should be examined in the morning, from the viewpoint of the door leading to the Archivio.

The miraculous picture enables the Cannobiesi to enjoy two special *Feste*. The first is held on the anniversary of the miracle, January 8th, and owing to the illuminations with which the winter night is celebrated, is known as the Festa dei Lumineri. A kind of sausage known as *luganighe* is the *plat* proper to the day. The second celebration is at Pentecost. On Whit Monday evening the Pietà is brought with melody and pomp to the Parish Church of S. Victor, where it remains on the High Altar till after High Mass on Tuesday, when it is solemnly restored to its own sanctuary. All the clergy of the sixteen parishes, all the wealth of banners, reliquaries, crosses, and vestments at their command, all the pious devotion of the guilds and confraternities, all the gay head and neck kerchiefs of the Val Cannobina, are in evidence in these processions, and the old streets are filled with a colour and an atmosphere rarely permitted by the drab uniformity of modern progress.

Cannero, the next village after Cannobio, enjoys the highest winter temperature on the lake owing to the shelter given it by the promontory of La Puncetta; and now that it offers comfortable if modest hotel accommodation, foreigners are beginning to avail themselves of its climatic amenities. Though warm in winter, it is never stuffy and stifling in summer. Beside the regular winds

of Maggiore—the morning Tramontana from the north, and the afternoon Inverna from the south-east—there blows in this district a night breeze from the land known as the Cannobina.

As we sit on the deck of a steamer ploughing down this widest portion of the lake, the Novarese Riviera wings to us a series of pictures which merge into a confused impression of immense fertility, of rank luxuriance, of smiling prosperity; until at last, dazed with a succession of spacious villas, and fair gardens, and all the rank luxuriance of blossoming shrubs, glowing fruits, and almost tropical vegetation, we lift our eyes to the curious uniformity of the hills covered with beechwood scrub. For here, as everywhere in Piedmont, the trees are cut down every ten or twelve years for firewood or charcoal, though here and there one is deliberately left unfelled to furnish shade for the sapling growth. The result, especially in spring, is a curious woolliness, or rather mossiness, of effect.

By the time Ghiffa is reached our gaze is strained and rested by a long-distance objective, for if the weather is clear, a vision of the Simplon giants here opens on us straight ahead.

And so we come to Intra, the "Manchester of Lake Maggiore." This was the name which Cavour gave to it—a name at once descriptive and misleading. Misleading, that is, for the majority of Britons; for the vision of tall chimneys belching smoke, of blackened buildings, of noise and squalor which it calls to their minds is wholly unlike the reality: descriptive, because the little town with its 8,000 inhabitants, is indeed a prosperous industrial centre and a very busy little port.

It is built on alluvial deposits between two streams, the S. Giovanni and the S. Bernardo—mere trickles in wide rocky beds for the greater part of the year, but converted now and then into raging, rushing torrents. On these torrent banks in the outskirts of the town, as well as on the roads winding among the foothills throughout the entire district, one constantly comes upon a building about

Photo] [*Balance*

A STREET IN GANDRIA ON LAKE LUGANO.

This roughly paved, exceedingly steep street is characteristic of many villages on and above the lake.

which one enquires as to whether it is a big villa, or a convent, or an institution. And the answer is nearly always: "*E un stabilimento*"—It is a factory. Iron and soap and dye works, and felt hat factories, rope works, paper and cotton mills—none of them are out of harmony with their surroundings. Trellised vines cluster closely round a yard where rusty iron is stacked, waiting for its conversion to fresh uses. Crimson roses in profusion are trained against the white walls of a *tipografia*, a printing-house. A bevy of hatless girls, their splendid hair beautifully arranged, issuing from the gates of a tidy garden, alone advertise the fact that a gay pink house with green shutters is not a private suburban residence, but a little ribbon factory. The atmosphere is of pellucid clearness. These lake-side factories have no need of coal, and every hillside village scintillates in the darkness with electric light. The only black cloud of smoke is given off by the lake steamer as it waits at the pontoon. It waits long there, for it always has much to disgorge. Coming across the lake from Laveno, whence there is a short and direct route *via* Varese to Milan, it brings the first fruits of the south to Lake Maggiore; and in Intra Market the *primeurs* of greengrocery may always be found.

Will you go with me to Intra Market on a Saturday—the chief market day? The fine broad modern thoroughfare facing the pier—the inevitable Corso XX Settembre with the equally inevitable statue of Garibaldi—is packed with booths which spread themselves inwards to the porticoed Municipio and even struggle up the narrow cobbled ancient high street, towards the Parish Church of S. Vittore. By 8 a.m. the market is in full swing, and those who would buy well must buy early. The prudent housewife, or her cook, turns betimes to the stalls where emerald lettuces, waxen turnips, great bundles of asparagus, and piles of fresh green peapods cry aloud to the gourmand, while crimson cherries and yellow lemons and piles of little wild strawberries, or yellow peaches, and figs green and black, and huge clusters of purple grapes, make their appeal alike to taste and eye,

Less decorative, but scarcely less tempting, are the trestles spread with innumerable kinds of cheese, the soft, white goat's-milk cheese being especially alluring. There is butter too, the major part furnished by a Piedmontese Latteria Co-operativa, sold in half-kilo (1 pound) rolls. Unfortunately, dried stock fish is also on sale. Anyone acquainted with its odour will understand why we may not linger at this stall.

To the "house-proud" woman the stalls exhibiting kitchen utensils are particularly attractive. Most of these utensils are of aluminium, and are produced by several thriving little factories in the neighbourhood. An Englishwoman, having invented a travelling cooker, which she wished to patent and put upon the market, tried in vain to get her designs materialized in her own land. It could only be done, she was told, at a prohibitive cost. She came out to Baveno, and in a small *stabilimento* there her model was made in a few hours at a very small price. On these market stalls we find neat little ladles, saucepans, strainers, and stewpots with covers and handles, of many sizes and shapes. The utensil, however, dearest to the heart of the English cottager and domestic servant we do not see either here or in any shop in Italy. I mean the kettle, the most uncleanly vessel ever invented! Look at that woman with white sleeves and black bodice and full skirt, wearing on her head a black handkerchief with coloured flowers. She is from the Val Cannobina, and she has come from afar to make some special purchase. It would take her less time to go to Locarno, but she would then have to cross the frontier, run the gauntlet of the dogana officials, produce a passport, and exchange, at an immense loss, her poor Italian paper money into Swiss metal francs. So she has risen before the dawn, descended, basket on back, to Cannobio, and taken a steamer to Intra. With much care she selects an aluminium pot with a swing handle. She does not bargain over it, however, as she would have done before the War; for all new articles in modern Italy are sold at *prezzi fissi*, fixed prices, clearly marked. But when she passes on to

the next stall, where second-hand copper vessels are on view, a little chaffering is done—though even here, the articles being sold by weight, there can be no great bargains or extortions. She leans her pointed *gharla* (conical basket) against the stall, and packs her copper and aluminium purchases securely between two bags of meal. The vendor helps to hoist the basket again upon her shoulders, and she moves away with a gentle salutation, a frail little body with thin face and eyes bright like a bird. "She is carrying at least fifty chili" (over 100 pounds), says the man, quickly following our eyes and thoughts, "and from Cannobio she has four hours' walk uphill; but there, they are habituated to that work."

The most entertaining spot in the market beyond question is that where two merry fellows are holding a sort of auction of dress goods, encircled by a large ring of admiring women. But though they listen and laugh, and pinch and pull materials with toilworn but finely formed and sensitive fingers, they purchase very little. Even in pre-War days the woman of the people rarely spent much on clothes. Hats she dispenses with entirely; her cloth house shoes are home-made, and except on high days she usually walks abroad in clogs.

Far brisker is the sale at the booths where wooden rakes and spades and great strong baskets are exposed, as also at the stalls of glass and china. Jugs and plates will break, and are to be had cheaper in Intra Market than in the shops; but only now and again do we meet with the big green basins and pitchers, decorative in shape and hue, which were once common.

But the sun grows fierce; the crowd dense; the noise wearisome. We will buy ripe fruit, white cheese, and delicious crusty bread, and return to the *embarcadère*, whence a motor-bus starts for the hill village of Premeno. But first we linger in the shadow of the wide portico of the Municipio, and read the record of Garibaldi's sojourn in Intra and of his preaching of "Unity, Concord, and Fortitude" "from Palm Sunday to Good Friday" before the days of Aspromonte, together with the names of those

volunteers from Intra who died in the War of Independence.

And then we lift our eyes to the hills, and they light on little groups of clustered houses, each with a shadowy campanile, rising here and there out of the woolly beech scrub. They resemble the symbolic towns which, in the pictures of Francia and other painters of his time, are carried on the hands of saints who are their tutelary guardians. A regular motor-bus service now connects some of these toy villages with the prosperous bustle of this market town; and we may purchase bread and fruit and cheese in Intra, and picnic far aloft in the cool, still chestnut glades of Premeno.

It is a favourite place of villegiatura with the Milanese; and if northerners are apt to find it too hot in high summer, they must admit that it is delicious in May, June, and again in early autumn, on, indeed, the days when most of the gay little villas have discharged their gay inhabitants, and the first frosts have given a signal that chestnut harvest may begin. Then the woodland glades echo again with sonorous voices and light laughter. The dead leaves are swept and banked up to keep the chestnuts from rolling away unseen, and while the men and boys beat the branches, the women and children pick up and throw into sacks the nuts which form the staple winter addition to their frugal diet.

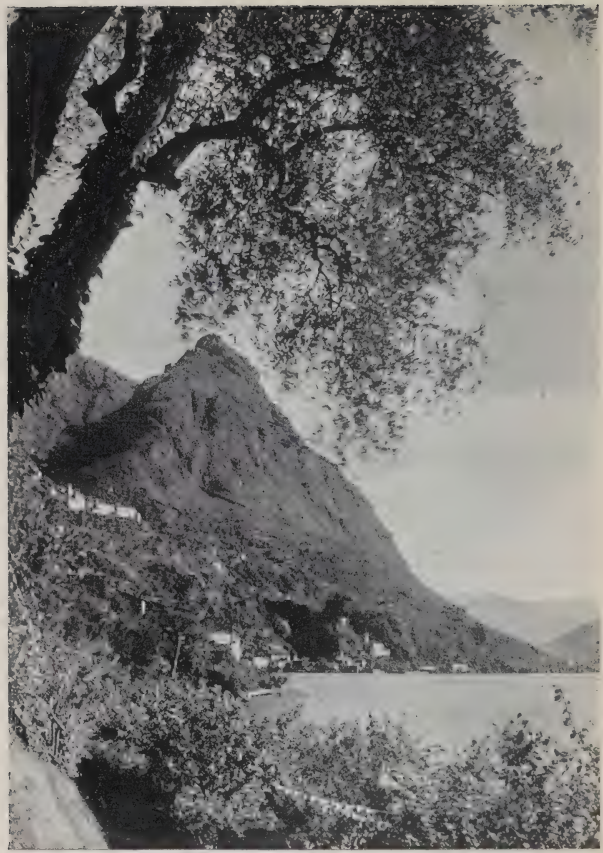


Photo Wehrli] [*Ailchberg, Zurich*

A DISTANT VIEW OF S. MAMETTE ON THE LAKE OF LUGANO.
Above, sunlit on the hillside, is the village of Castello.

CHAPTER XI

MAGGIORE

"What varied lovelinesses lie in broad Maggiore!"
ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

IN his "Promenades dans Rome" Stendhall enquires which is the best way of journeying from Paris to Italy; and he decides in favour of the Simplon route "*because it leads more quickly than any other to Lago Maggiore opposite the Borromean Islands.*"

The quickness has, of course, been accelerated to a speed of which Stendhall never dreamed; yet we may doubt whether the interest of the old descent down the long windings of the great Napoleonic road, the transition from bleak rocks and scanty herbage and hardy pines to the luxuriant zones of walnut and vines and chestnut, the glamour—almost intoxicating in our condition of pleasurable fatigue—of that first glimpse of the lake with its four fairy isles, are not things which are dearly paid for by the convenience accruing from a mighty engineering feat. In those days at least the Customs examination at the frontier town of Domo D'Ossola was a rather pleasing incident instead of a trial of strength and patience.

Pallanza, at the head of the gulf containing the famous islands, is undoubtedly the most convenient centre for sightseeing in the whole district. On one side is the excellent road skirting the shore, with its consequent automobile service; on the other the trams leading to the lakelet of Mergozzo, and on to Lake Orta; while the time-table of converging steamers, and their correspondence with the railway at Laveno on the opposite bank, make it possible for us to visit Varese or either end of the lake within the day.

Pallanza has been thrice founded. The Celts coming over the Simplon Pass occupied the high ground now called

Castagnola; the Romans camped on the level near the Lake; lastly, a piecemeal mediæval town rose by fits and starts on and around the Roman site, and gradually spread upwards to the old position of the Celts. Its name is connected by the best modern authorities with its earliest settlers, and the derivation from the Latin *Pallas* is now rejected in favour of one from the Celtic *Palanz*—a public meeting-place. On the shores of Como is a village of the same name, though it is now customarily spelt Palanzo.

Those who are interested in Roman antiquity—and who can travel in Italy without continually looking at the rock whence her civilization was hewn, or feeling the glamour of that "glory which was Rome"(?)—would do well to give a quarter of an hour to the admirably arranged little museum of Verbano, which adjoins the post office of Pallanza. There—as the *clou* of the Roman antiquities—we shall find the Cippus so much admired by Mommsen dedicated to the Matron Goddesses. It was excavated in 1601 near the High Altar of the Church of S. Stefano, which doubtless occupies the site of a pagan temple, as does the little twelfth-century Church of S. Remigio, just below the summit of Castagnola. It was restored in the sixteenth century by one Girolamo Appiano, whose bust, a finely carved figure of a man with a ruff and pointed beard, is conspicuous on the left wall of the nave. There are two frescoes—an Assumption and Deposition—of the same date, and faint traces of some belonging to a much earlier period. The poor little altarless church, though it has now been declared a national monument, has a desolate and unkempt air. Its key can be obtained at the Church of S. Bernardo in Pallanza, but most visitors will, under present conditions, be contented to peer into the dim aisle through the grated windows sheltered by the characteristic wide porch, from which it is so delightful to look out at the sunlit lake and distant hills.

Close to the church, though rarely visited since it lies within the confines of the adjacent Villa Remigio, or Casanova, is a little enclosure, planted with palms and

dracænas. An inscription let into the wall dedicates it to those who sleep their last sleep within this peaceful plot; and the juxtaposition of pedestalled urns bearing pagan relieis, ranged round the walls, with stones exhibiting Christian symbols, serves as illustration and reminder of the doctrinal and architectural substitutions and superimpositions which seem to have taken place in the fourth century without any violent resistance or iconoclasm throughout Italian lakeland.

One of the newer terraces, looking towards Intra, is a lovely rose garden, where a touching inscription records the happiness and gratitude of its planners, the late owners of the villa; another reminds us consolingly that *Rosæ transeunt, memoria manet.* The older, western set of terraces are adjacent to the church and house. They are vaulted, and in some of the vaults we find a profusion of rare ferns, while one of them is hung with tiny stalactites. Statuary, staircases, balustrades, are all in the purest and most restrained taste of the seventeenth century, and no surcharged flamboyance detracts, as in Isola Bella, from our admiration of horticultural feats, our delight in luxuriant colour and in subtle perfume.

Pallanza has done its best to mitigate its rather scorching summer climate by planting avenues of planes and magnolias. One of these stretches out towards Intra, another reaches far along the road to Suna, a third penetrates a whole straight kilometre inland, to the exceedingly picturesque Church of the Madonna di Campagna. Suna and Pallanza quarrelled for centuries over their rights of property in this church, now declared a national monument.

The Campagna, or green fields, in which it is situated are at the foot of Monte Rossa. Good walkers will enjoy a morning's climb to its summit, where is the little oratory of Santa Croce; while those who are less active will drive round the mountain past the Church of S. Peter with its carved wooden altar, past the paper factory of Santino, through exceedingly fertile country busy with industry and agriculture, sweet in late spring with acacia

blooms, and in autumn rich with the glowing tints of ripening fruit and dying foliage. Another delightful little expedition may be made to the secluded little Lake of Mergozzo, which is, in fact, merely the extremity of a northward-pushing arm of Maggiore, from which it is being parted by the alluvial deposit of the impetuous Tosa or Toce. In early days of steam navigation on Maggiore, the steamers included it in their rounds; and a decade ago sailing boats plied back and forth by the channel which remained as a means of communication between the lesser and greater basin. To-day the channel is wellnigh impassable by a small rowing boat. It is doubtful whether, in view of increasing motor facilities, it will be found worth while to improve and maintain this perpetually menaced water communication. The tram for Omegna deposits the pedestrian close to the lake, and a pleasant, well-kept road along the shore leads to the little town of Mergozzo, at whose deserted quay the steamers formerly called. Running up among the green foothills which cling to the giants of the Simplon range, the little lake, with its grey shadows, its glancing alders, willows, and yellow rushes, has almost the aspect of a Welsh llyn or a Yorkshire tarn; but the hoarse croak of green frogs, the vineyard patches, the masses of white acacia and the golden rain of laburnum on the hills, the descent of great trees felled on the heights by means of a taut wire rope to a sawmill at the water's level, and the characteristic hooped boat in which two men are alternately spearing fish and letting out ropes, serve as picturesque reminders that we are on the southern side of the Alps.

Opposite to Pallanza, on the Lombard shore, is the busy town of Laveno—the Roman Labienum—backed by the cone of the Sasso Grande, which some folk liken to Vesuvius. The long pink building noticeable on the hillside is now the Ceramic Factory, employing 1,400 hands. It was a barrack when the big fort west of the town was an Austrian stronghold; and one of the many picturesque episodes of the guerilla warfare of the Risorgimento was the attack of volunteers from Piedmontese

Intra and Pallanza upon Laveno—an attack that failed because the Austrians were forewarned.

The views from the shore, especially at sunset, are so beautiful that we bear with patience the long waiting of the steamer as it lades and unlades at this busy port.

From Laveno to Angera, 15 kilometres away to the south, there is not a single steamer quay; nor on this somewhat monotonous shore is there more than one spot of interest for the tourist. The interest has of late years diminished, owing to the cessation of a strange natural phenomenon; but nothing can reduce the exceeding picturesqueness of the little monastery and aggregation of chapels known as Santa Caterina del Sasso (S. Catherine of the Rock). This group of white buildings, packed on a ledge of the sunbaked precipice overhanging this deep and beachless portion of the lake, wears an aspect of southern rather than of northern Italy. A flight of rude stone steps cut into the rock connects it with the water. Figtrees and vines grow luxuriantly around it; and above it rises a hillside clothed with verdure, breaking, in the spring, into a spray of gold laburnum. Below it the sunlight glints over the blue-green lake and its isles. Facing it is the long wooded ridge of the Mergozzolo, parting the basins of Maggiore and Orta, and rising into the height of Mottarone; and away to the north-west the eye travels on and on through successive gradations of shadowy Alps.

The story of this spot is as unique as its situation. In the twelfth century a certain Alberto Besozzo, addicted to smuggling, usury, and other evil courses, was sailing back to his home at Arolo, a village a little south of this point, when a sudden squall swept down upon the lake, and his boat was overturned. The drowning man vowed to God that if his life were spared it should be spent in penitence. He was thrown up against the rock, and contrived to scale the precipice to the little platform, where he found shelter in a cave or fissure. Here for thirty-four years he lived, subsisting on fruit and roots and what bread the neighbouring fishermen placed in a basket, which he drew up and down from his lair, and

establishing a great local reputation for sanctity. During an epidemic of plague the priests of the district besought his intercession. He prayed to Christ and Saint Catherine of Alexandria; the plague was stayed; and the grateful neighbourhood erected a chapel on his ledge, and dedicated it to the Alexandrian martyr. The death of the hermit, of course, called for the erection of another chapel; and the subsequent arrival of some Dominican friars gave rise to a conventual church. In the middle of the *seicento* the growing cult of the Blessed Alberto received an immense impetus through the fall of a mass of rock, which, detaching itself from the cliff far above, crashed through the roof just above the venerated tomb. And then a miracle of arrested motion and suspension appeared to happen. One of the five stones into which the falling mass had split was stayed by two or three frail bricks; the rest were jammed into the first; and in this precarious position the whole remained suspended till May, 1910.

It cannot be denied that there is a falling off in the numbers and the fervour of the April pilgrims who formerly, parish by parish, visited the rock; but the assertion of certain journalists that Santa Caterina has forfeited since 1910 her right to the surname *del Sasso* cannot be admitted. It was, in fact, applied to the sanctuary long before the rock fall of the seventeenth century, and relates simply to its situation on the cliff called Sasso Ballare.

The most venerated saint upon the lake is not, however, the Blessed Alberto, nor St. Catherine, nor yet the Madonna, but St. Carlo Borromeo. A son of Count Gilberti Borromeo of Arona, nephew and councillor of Pius IV., indefatigable organizer, intrepid social worker, devoted diocesan, narrow-minded persecutor, he dominated and left his impress on every village of the district; and his mortal semblance, transformed to copper and bronze and swollen to gigantic dimensions, still surveys, from a pedestal of 30 feet, the scene of his former spiritual and temporal power. The monument, erected in 1697 at Arona, his birthplace, testifies to the admiration of a generation immediately succeeding his own, but is in

every other respect a failure—as all such colossi must be. "People are apt to joke about statues of such size," says Ruskin, "and to speculate about the probable effect of a blow from their fists or a shake of their hand, and a monument should never induce feelings of this kind." Feelings, and words of a less jocular and more profane nature, are usually induced by those who are misguided enough to ascend the ladders conducting up to, and into, the head of the statue, more especially when the summer sunshine, striking on the outside of the metal, raises the temperature of the inside to infernal heat.

The Colossus is reached by an uphill walk of twenty minutes from the flourishing little town of Arona, which came into the possession of the Borromei in the fifteenth century. Of their Castle there remains a mere fragment, practically incorporated into a church which seems wholly consecrated to the honour and glory of the family.

We are shown S. Carlo's relics—fragments of bone, hair, and handkerchief—the room in which he was born; and paintings by Gaudenzio Ferrari, in which his figure appears worshipping on earth and glorified in heaven; together with an altar-piece in which a motherless Holy Child is surrounded by five ladies of the great family. The Virgin is nowhere visible in this church; she is ousted completely by the Borromei. Beyond the venerated bedroom is a corridor with four windows, looking across the lake to another and better preserved Borromean castle on the opposite rock of Angera.

The ugly mass of buildings brought into existence first by its steamer traffic, and then by its importance as a principal station on the Simplon line, has destroyed the beautiful aspect which Arona once presented to the lake, and which we only know to-day in the drawings of Ruskin and Turner. A monument commemorating the arrival of the line, and standing conspicuously in a public square, is, however, a real work of art; the sculptor has perceived and depicted the poetry and romance of a mighty engineering feat. Two churches in the town, Santa Maria and the Santi Martiri, will be visited by lovers of Italian art.

The latter contains an altar-piece by Borgognone, the former an altar screen by Gaudenzio Ferrari.

From the great statue—the San Carlone—we may walk to the next steamer quay, Meina, either by making a long and pleasant détour *via* the enchanting hill villa of Dagnente, or, more directly, by the high-road skirting the lake. On this road we pass a large villa in classical style—the Farrigiana—to the grounds of which access is obtained by a small fee to the gardener. Here we shall find an extraordinary company of beasts and birds, some caged, others free, together with a museum of stuffed animals, reptiles, fishes, birds and insects, collected in many lands.

After Meina the steamer passes Lesa, picturesque, though busily industrial, with paper, woollen, and cotton mills; and then we come to Belgirate and Stresa, the least interesting but most fashionable places on the lake. Having no past, they are enjoying a present, and making a future. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Cavour was wont to sojourn there, Stresa was a primitive village. To-day it boasts a complete progressive apparatus of Kursaal, bands, gardens, promenades, foot-ball and tennis clubs, and sumptuous hotels. Moreover, it is the headquarters of the Royal Verbano Yacht Club. Its great new claim to popularity is, however, the electric railway which now ascends from it to the summit of Mottarone. This means of breathing pure high air, or taking evening strolls along the mountain sides from the train's intermediate halting-places, as well as its situation on a particularly breezy reach of the lake, makes Stresa the most suitable and frequented place upon Maggiore for a summer stay.

Mr. Baghot dogmatically asserts that the Mottarone cannot be compared for beauty and interest with Generoso. *De gustibus non disputandum;* but it must be conceded that Mottarone has a nearer and clearer vision of the glories of the Monte Rosa chain, and that "bells of herds down the run of its sweet grasses, and a continual leaping of rivulets give it a voice of youth and homeliness"; charms

Photo Brunner [*Como*

PANORAMA OF THE BORROMEAN ISLES.

With Pallanza on the mainland.

which are conspicuously lacking on the arid Jurassic limestone of Generoso.

This verdure of piled-up pasture land was, however, displeasing to Ruskin, who perhaps made the ascent under unfavourable conditions of atmosphere or mood. He pronounces the Mottarone to be "the stupidest of all mountains, grass all the way, no rocks, no interest, and the dullest view of the Alps I ever saw." George Meredith, on the contrary, fills the opening chapters of "Vittoria" with eloquence on the theme of dawn and sunrise seen from the summit, and sums up his verdict with the words: "There is not an easier or a pleasanter height to climb than the Mottarone, if, in Italian heat, you can endure the disappointment of seeing the summit, as you ascend, constantly flit away to a higher station. It seems to throw back its head like a laughing senior when children struggle up for kissings."

The modern railway-alpinist of course, escapes such tantalizing; but a descent on foot is to be recommended, especially in the season when there are patches of pasture where the green is lost in the deep blue of gentians, and masses of lily-of-the-valley hide in the brushwood coverts. For rich and varied flora Mottarone utterly refuses to yield the palm to Generoso or any other European height. The most direct, if not the easiest, descent is to Baveno; the next station, by rail or steamer to Stresa, to which by road it is linked with a long sequence of gay villas embowered in gayer gardens.

The visitors to Baveno are almost entirely British. The kindness and hospitality shown by Mr. Henfrey and his widow to their compatriots, the well-ordered English church erected in their grounds, the prestige of Queen Victoria's residence in their villa, Villa Clara, in 1879, have been potent factors of attraction: and travellers of other nationalities, finding the ground already occupied, and, so to speak, entrenched, have fallen back on Pallanza, or passed on to Stresa and Belgirate.

The celebrated quarries, of red and white marble—or, to speak more correctly, crystallized granite—lie north

of the town on the road to Feriolo, a village inhabited almost entirely by *scalpellini*—stonecutters. The yards and sheds of the various firms quarrying and working the granite lie in a line along the shore, so that the water transport is greatly facilitated. After the absolutely dead time of the War and the difficult first years of peace, the trade is exhibiting faint symptoms of returning prosperity. The skill in design, draughtsmanship, and delicate chiselling shown by some of the workmen is very remarkable; and those who are interested in hereditary trades and in fine craftsmanship should not fail to pay a visit to the marblers' beach.

The Lombardic but much restored Parish Church of Baveno, with its cloistered enclosure and seventh-century Baptistery occupy an effective situation on a platform above the town. The picturesque group of buildings is approached by a long and wide flagged road, inlet here and there with stairs—a wonderfully dramatic ascent or descent for a Good Friday or a Corpus Domini procession, or for a funeral cortège. In the writer's mind it is, indeed, always associated with a child's burial, on a sweet May evening, when all Nature seemed to pulse with free and joyous life. The little coffin was invisible beneath a mass of lilies and roses, and a following of schoolgirls in starched white frocks carrying white posies gave a bridal aspect to the scene; while the bells, which toll at the passing of adults, gave vent for this little one to a jig-like music. The bells of Baveno, and indeed of Maggiore generally, are, however, disappointing to ears accustomed to the sonorous sweetness of the belfries of Lake Como.

From the church terrace, or the higher level of Baveno station, the Borromean Islands are seen in their loveliest aspect; while Baveno is also the easiest point of departure for their close inspection—always excepting the tiny island of S. Giovanni, which is scarcely separated from the Pallanza shore. In the tenth century this islet had its church and feudal stronghold, whereas its bigger sisters were barren rocks on to the middle of the *seicento*. Passing into the excellent hands of the Borromei in 1632,

San Giovanni soon began to blossom as a rose. Its pretty dwelling-house was for several years occupied by an Englishman, Mr. Capel Cure, known to Italians by his *nom de plume* of Giacomo della Quercia.

The most renowned of the islands is Isola Bella, whose name should not, as many people think, be rendered in English *Fair Isle*, but the *Island of Isabella*. Whether the lady in question were the Trivulzio heiress who bequeathed it to the Borromei, or the wife of Count Cesare is uncertain; but certain it is that this great landlord, who under the Spanish domination of the seventeenth century had probably but little scope for his ingenious and enterprising spirit, converted the barren rock into a place of *villegiatura*, building up on it ten garden terraces, with a sumptuous, though still uncompleted, chateau residence. The terraces, planted with citrons and oranges, cork and camphor trees, cedars, bananas, myrtles, palms, camellias, and other exotic plants, rise in perfumed and balustraded sequence to a height of 100 feet above the level of the lake. Statues, summer-houses, and strange grottoes are pointed out to us by diligent gardeners; and other custodians conduct us through a series of reception rooms, showing us ancient arms and Flemish tapestries, Napoleon's bedroom, and rare ceramics, ending with a gallery of copies—with here and there an original—of the Lombard masters. As a *tour de force* of will and wealth, of imagination and horticulture, Isola Bella is unique. As a real beauty spot it fails, exceeding the proper limits of the style it represents, and straining the opulence of art and nature to the verge of vulgar ostentation.

Far purer in type are the older gardens of Isola Madre, where a villa of moderate size, light in tone, simple in line, and pleasing in proportion, is the apex of five terraces, espaliered with oranges and lemons, and gay with many-tinted flowers. Through them wide and noble steps conduct to the edge of the crystalline lake, in which the brightness of balustrades and statues mingles in reflections with the reversed forms of dark-hued trees. On the north side of the island there is a space for park-like groves—for

whereas the lesser Isola Bella is tightly packed with a church, three inns, and numerous dwellings, the larger Isola Madre has only its signorial villa. These sylvan glades are tenanted by song birds, with a few more exotic inhabitants in the shape of white peacocks, and their seclusion makes them one of the pleasant lounging places on the lake.

A price, however, has sometimes to be paid for this quiet enjoyment. The steamer quay at Isola Bella is both a cause and an effect of its popularity. The more retiring Isola Madre can be reached only in a small boat. Now the evening row home may be a delicious sequel to a tranquil afternoon, but it may be a wet and terrifying episode. When wild storm-clouds gather over Switzerland, and the Sasso di Ferro grows hard and dark against a misty sky; when the rising wind strikes livid streaks into the lake, and these spread till the whole billowing surface is the hue of greenish slate—then the comparatively little space which parts the island from Pallanza or Baveno becomes, even to a practised boatman, a "passage perilous."

The fourth island—Isola Superiore or dei Pescatori—is not really Borromean. While the other three exemplify capitalist ownership in its most magnificent and munificent aspect, the little Pescatori stands for communism. It is literally the Fishermen's Isle, the property of its inhabitants, the implements of whose picturesque craft are everywhere in evidence. Their church and their habitations, with wooden balconies and windows gay with carnations and geraniums, cluster at one end of the island: the opposite point is left bare and free for stretching and mending long yards of nets.

Let us say our good-bye to Maggiore upon this homely little isle.

It is a June night; the lake is motionless as a sea of glass. In the dusk every sound seems intensified, and the light dip of the oars fills the warm silence. We land at the restaurant on the east side of the island, and mooring the boat, ascend the stairs to a little terrace arched with shadowy foliage. A girl, whose lovely brow and sinewy

Photo] [*Ballance*

A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF THE CITY OF LUGANO.

Monte Brè is seen to the left: at its foot is the promontory of Castagnola, thick with villas and gardens. Across the lake are the houses and celebrated *cantine* of Caprino.

form and strange, rich voice recall La Duse, sets a lamp on a round table and brings out wine and coffee. We tell her we have come to say good-bye, and she bids us change the phrase to *a rivederci*. We drink to the health of Verbano and to a future meeting. And then, as we know that lights are already out in this isle of workers whose slumbers end with the first rays of dawn, we descend again into our boat, and pushing off into the lake, we watch as though it were a scene in a stage-play the rhythmic motion of the girl, as, with superb poise of head and lifted arm, she ascends an outside stone staircase, bearing her little gleaming lamp, and enters the already darkened house.

CHAPTER XII

VARESE

"In some picturesque respects Varese is the most perfect of the lakes. These long lines of swelling hills . . . yield an infinite series of placid foregrounds pleasant to the eye by contrast with the dominant snow summits; . . . the sky is limitless to southward; the low horizons are broken by bell-towers and farm-houses; while armaments of clouds are ever rolling in the intervals of Alps and plain."—ADDINGTON SYMONDS ("Sketches in Italy").

THERE is one characteristic of Varese which we seize on before arrival, namely—to use an awkward epithet for a convenient thing—its extreme get-at-ableness. It is reached from Milan in little over an hour; from Como in less than two hours; from Laveno—a steamboat station on Lago Maggiore and a station on the Bellinzona-Genoa line—in about the same time. Light railways radiate from it, to Luino on Lago Maggiore—passing through the Olona gorge and the lovely Valganna—and to Porto Ceresio, and Ponte Tresa on Lake Lugano; while a network of cheap and comfortable electric trams connects the little city with every point of interest in its vicinity.

This first salient characteristic of Varese is closely connected with the second, obvious from the moment of arrival, its spruce modernity. It bristles with the successful enterprise of modern Northern Italy. It is not vulgar, for vulgarity implies pretension. The dwellers in those gay little suburban villas which are multiplying so fast on the outskirts, or the owners of the older palatial homes standing in well-kept grounds, are not trying to be other than they appear, or to appear other than they are. They are frankly bourgeois; prosperous, but not offensively wealthy; self-respecting, but not blatantly self-satisfied; and while fast developing a new regard for cleanliness and comfort, never losing the old Italian feeling for the graceful and the *convenable*.

Photo Brunner] [*Como*

ISOLA PESCATORI.

Fishermen's dwellings on the Island.

Varese

It is difficult to find any English parallel to Varese. The air of easy opulence in its villadom recalls the semi-suburban portions of our home counties; but the majority of these villas are not all-the-year-round houses, as are the "desirable residences" of our city men, but are merely the hot-weather resorts of their Milanese possessors. The residue are inhabited by local aristocrats or industrials. For Varese is a prosperous commercial city; though those who are accustomed to the disagreeable manifestations of manufacturing Britain would hardly suspect it. The biggest brewery—Varese beer is famous and compares well with the best Munich—is "bosomed high in tufted" acacias, and is often mistaken for a plutocrat's residence or a fashionable hotel. No smoke sullies the clear air, for the use of electric power is fully developed; nor is it thought unfitting that prosperous *stabilimenti* (works) should stand in well-kept gardens, and be architecturally pleasing.

Again, no sharp-drawn line parts, as in Britain, the urban and rural activities of the Varesotto. It is one of the richest and most assiduously cultivated districts in Europe; a land of maize and flax, of mulberry trees, of fruit and vegetables—all scientifically produced, and systematically worked up and distributed; a land of breezy hill pastures with artificial and natural irrigation, exploited in conjunction with co-operative dairy farms. Every walk we take in the Varesotto increases our appreciation of the Shakespearean tag, "fruitful Lombardy," and of the modern Lombard's engineering skill, business capacity, industry, and thrift.

And then—to make it still more difficult to find a match for Varese among things seen in England—we note that, with all her up-to-date activity, her modern prosperity, she is no upstart or *nouveau riche*, devoid of a sense of *noblesse oblige* or the repose of a background. The date of her founding and the meaning of her name are alike lost in the mists of remote antiquity. It may be connected with the Celtic *Var* (water) or preserve the name and importance of a Roman family. Etruscans, Celts, Romans, certainly occupied the region. Theodoric,

Odoacer, and the twenty Lombard Kings, ruled it in succession. In 996 the Emperor Otto I. was its overlord. Like Como, it supported Barbarossa in his struggles against the Lombard cities. For over a century it was an independent Commune, and when it acknowledged the Archbishop of Milan as overlord, it retained a large measure of autonomy. It calls itself Magnifica et Insigna Communitas, engraves this title on its seal, and flaunts the white pennon and red cross of its patron, the Mauritanian Knight St. Victor. The original church dedicated to him rose on the site of a temple of Jupiter; the existing basilica, stately and well cared for, erected in the closing years of the *cinquecento* by Pellegrino Pelligrini, has preserved few traces of its antiquity; but the Baptistery beside it is of the thirteenth century, save a portion on the left which is far older. The principal historical source for this independent period—the Codex of the Statuti Varensi—shows us Varese divided into Sestieri (illogically called *i ses quader*) and administered by a Regent and Consuls. Through the courtesy of the Sindaco, I was able to examine this and other sources for the History of Varese preserved in the Archivio Prepositurale. Among them is a grant of privilege made by the Emperor Conrad II. in the year 1027. A curiously modern Board of Health examines provisions coming from beyond the seas, and applies sanitary regulations, especially in times of epidemics; while the hospital, as an institution, is one of the most ancient in Italy.

The prosperity of Varese was increased by Il Moro's introduction of the silkworm and the mulberry. Under the Spanish domination it was blighted and stultified like the rest of Lombardy; nor did the privilege granted to it by Charles V., that it should never be given in fee to any of the dependencies of the Dukes of Milan, avail to prevent it from being handed by Maria Teresa to the Duke of Modena. Francis II. of Este, a benign gentleman, with little taste for government and a good deal for display and gallantry, proved, however, a popular ruler. He was the builder and inhabitant of the

villa-like palace called the Corte, now converted into a dignified Palazzo Municipale. An obliging official will, on request, conduct us through some of the stately old rooms, opening a shutter here, or drawing back a curtain there, to reveal a painted ceiling or noteworthy portrait. Till quite recently the ballroom, with its dainty eighteenth-century decorations, served as the assembly rooms of Varese: now, however, when balls and concerts are given in more commodious modern premises, it is left in semi-darkness as a habitation for the ghosts of the fair dames in powder, hoops, and patches, and the gallants in perukes and ruffles, who once bowed and pirouetted on the polished floor, and sat very upright on its brocaded seats and gilded chairs.

The fine garden of the Corte is thrown open to the public; and no sweeter spot can be imagined in which to bask in the autumn sunshine, or enjoy the coolness of a long May evening. Steep ilex-shaded paths lead to the summit of a boundary hill, where roughened marble statues assume in the twilight a ghostly air, and the tall trunks of pines are reddened by the sunset glow. We watch the golden light pale slowly behind the great hills to westward; and when we turn our steps and our faces again towards the Corte, it lies, low and crouching, in a dreary, unlighted sleep. Only the flowers in the carefully ended beds seem to grow sweeter and more vivid in the evening dusk, as though protesting against the impatient porter's intimation that closing time has come.

The phase of the Corte passed in that *débâcle* of princelings so well pictured in Edith Wharton's "Valley of Decision"; and Varese, under the Cisalpine Republic, became *capo luogo* of the Department of Verbano. The triumph of "Legitimist principles" at the Congress of Vienna enabled the Austrian Emperor to declare to Venetia and Lombardy: "You belong to me by right of conquest, and ought to forget you are Italian." But Varese did not forget; and to-day she remembers proudly that she was the first Italian city outside Piedmont to declare allegiance to the House of Savoy.

Varese

Year by year, on May 27th, her citizens celebrate the victory of Garibaldi and his Cacciatori over Marshal Urbain in 1859. In 1921 this anniversary chanced to coincide with the day of Corpus Domini, and the writer had the good fortune to be in Varese on this date. Both patriots and devout Catholics had their processions, and a general holiday was celebrated with great hilarity. The day dawned clear, bright, and fresh after a night of oppressive heat and torrential rain, and by seven o'clock every man, woman, and child seemed to be in the streets, some hastening to Mass, and others wending their way towards the Corte, in front of which the civic procession formed. The children were marshalled first: girls in white, carrying posies, daughters of "Garibaldini" families; lads in the grey uniform of the *ginnasio* ; the schools with their teachers. Presently some young men appear from a side street, some carrying the tricolour, on which is superimposed the arms, crimson and gules, of the city; others floral trophies destined for the honoured graves; and forthwith, about 7.30 a.m., the procession starts. After the children come the civic authorities; and then, in automobiles, some six or seven old men—"all that was left of us." They sit erect, looking about them with keen eyes, clearly conscious that they are the pivot figures of the procession. They are followed by infantry of the Varese Division—well equipped, well-set-up, marching with military precision, exhibiting military impassivity—representatives of the Army of a first-class Power, which owes its existence to Garibaldi's successes of 1859. Lastly comes a band nearer surely in spirit and appearance to the veterans' memories of their former selves: buoyant, resolute, self-conscious, carrying their redoubtable sticks like rifles, come some sixty or seventy Fascisti—a new and purposeful young Italy.

If the civil procession recalls the most picturesque and epoch-making episodes of modern history, the ecclesiastical procession, which starts on its tortuous course two hours later, is reminiscent of the great days of mediæval

Prof. G. H. Bryan, F.R.S.]

(1) THE ISLAND OF S. GIULIO.

The town of Orta in the foreground is seen from the grounds of the Hotel Belvedere.

(2) THE PIAZZA OF ORTA.

The boat-club competition is about to commence.

Catholicism. A description of the clerical faces, gestures, costumes, and accessories is superfluous, as long as Gentile Bellini's picture of a procession crossing St. Mark's Square or Carpaccio's Burial of St. Ursula is exhibited in the Accademia of Venice. The constituent parts of all big ecclesiastical processions—schools, guilds, confraternities, canons, town and village clergy—are fully represented; but the red-tippeted men are none of them young, nor are they apparently of the more educated and prosperous classes; the element represented by soldiers and Fascisti in the Garibaldini procession is noticeably absent. Nor is there the long, lay unofficial tail of the Corpus Domini processions of even twenty years ago. Those who formerly processed and sang with pious self-sacrifice in the hot streets, now stand as onlookers in the grateful shadow of the porticoes, or at windows which give upon the course. The sentiment of ages still holds: heads are always bared, and knees are sometimes bent even under modern Socialist local government; but one is conscious that the old atmosphere is gone.

Its extinction is obtrusively evident when we make the great excursion, or pilgrimage—call it which you will—to Varese's Sacro Monte, two and a half miles from the city. Tradition makes the original shrine a votive offering on the part of Ambrose, the great Archbishop of Milan and Father of the Western Church, who thereby commemorated the discomfiture of the Arians. A portion of the existing church dates from the thirteenth century, though it was altered and "embellished" in the seventeenth; while a crypt below the high altar is probably of the seventh. In this crypt we find a very ancient fresco, as well as the bones of a local saint, S. Caterina of Pallanza, and a dried crocodile exhibited as the dragon which once ravaged the district.

The Pilgrims' Way to the Sacro Monte is punctuated by fourteen chapels, in which are life-sized and often life-like terracotta groups, depicting with painful realism the Mysteries of the Rosary. The work, which occupied altogether seventy years, was enthusiastically instigated

by Cardinal Federico Borromeo, nephew of San Carlo, and the founder of the celebrated Ambrosian Library in Milan. It is a stiff pull to the summit of the mountain (2,885 feet), and in this hurrying age few pilgrims will refuse the assistance of the modern cog-wheel railway for making the ascent; but they will do well to descend on foot by the old, clean, broad, cobble-stoned road with its delicious points of view. It is grass-grown, deserted, and pleasantly peaceful by contrast with the packed railway compartments, and the noisy trafficking round about the Sanctuary. So obnoxious are these hucksters' stalls, that one is reluctant to linger on the summit even to trace the various features of the extensive and exquisite panorama It can, in fact, be viewed to greater advantage from the neighbouring height, picturesquely called Campo dei Fiori, towards which we journey out from Varese on the same tram-line as far as the last lap of ascent, when the railway bifurcates. A big modern hotel rises close to the Campo di Fiori terminus, and offers all the amenities of a good restaurant. Leaving it on the left, we ascend a little higher to the point marked by, and called, Tre Croci. From this eminence we gain a complete conception of the forms and direction of the succession of swelling hills which part the Varesotti from the basins of Maggiore and Lugano. Far away to the west, clear cut against a glowing evening sky, are the giant peaks of the Monte Rosa group; southward is the illimitable plain; immediately beneath us are the rich pastures, the intensive culture, the smart villas, the smiling gardens, and the little placid lake of Varese.

It is a lovely feature of the distant landscape, this "laughing face upturned to heaven," as Mr. Addington Symonds calls it. But if we descend to its shores we find it a trifle uninteresting. Villas rise upon its banks—no marble balustrades, no garden stairs, no wealth of flowering shrubs are reflected in its waters. It offers little allurement to the fisherman; and wild fowl are conspicuously absent from its level shores. In these later days, however, certain monster birds have their habitations

there, and may be seen skimming across its waves and soaring away into the blue air. The last time the writer stood beside Lake Varese, it was in the company of an Italian airman, who presently rose on white wings from the glass-like surface and steered a straight course for Venice.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LAKE OF ORTA

"I saw a lake, with one small lonely isle."

WE must live in the tropics, perhaps, to realize the full attractiveness of the promise "they shall take up serpents." Nevertheless the hagiographies of many Northern peoples contain stories of snake-charming and snake banishment. Some of them may indicate actual incidents; most of them, undoubtedly, commemorate allegorically the spiritual power and prowess of the champions of Christian purity in their struggle with the unclean forces of heathendom.

The third century was drawing to a close, and Theodosius was Emperor, when two brothers, named Julius and Julian, sons of Christian parents in Greece, were commissioned to preach Christ in remote parts of the Empire. They arrived at Novara, conferred with St. Gaudentius, already in the field, and journeyed on in a north-westerly direction. Then Julian halted at Gozzano, and Julius, going a little further, sighted the lake known to the Roman world as Lacus Cusius, but which mediæval Europe—though, of course, he never guessed it would be so—rechristened il Lago di San Giulio.

Now on the Cusian Lake he spied a little isle, which beckoned to him with irresistible fascination. In vain the simple fisher-folk informed him it was the abode of "serpents and hydras and chimæras dire," and refused to ferry him across to certain death. Unfurling his cloak as a sail, and holding his staff as a rudder, he stepped on to the surface of the water, and the wind, rising suddenly—after a fashion it has in no wise abandoned—promptly blew him to the haven where he would be. The impenetrable brushwood covering the isle at once parted before him; and the monsters and reptiles fled into the lake, from

Photo Brunner] [*Como*

A GLIMPSE AT ISOLA BELLA.

Seen through a vine-trellised doorway on the road from Baveno to Streasa.

whence some of them swam to shore and took refuge in the mountains.

It may have been one of their descendants that I heard rustling through the grass as I walked one brilliant morning among the chestnut woods. "One sees that you looked upon the viper before he looked at you," was the comment of my Italian maidservant, when I returned, healthy and hungry, and related my *rencontre* to her. I looked enquiry. She hesitated. Then she said, as one who enlightens a poor ignoramus: "Signora, you remember the morning when you called to me and bid me fetch you water? You had sunk down on the garden seat, all white and trembling." Yes, I remembered; I recollected also that, lured on by the beauty of the early morning hours, I had taken, contrary to my habit, a long walk before tasting food.

"You had not seen a viper, but, of course, as Cecco and I said at the time, a viper had looked on you; that was the cause of your faintness." And she continued, growing more voluble and earnest as I was silent: "You remember another day when they came and fetched me to go home to my mother?" In the evening you asked me what ailed her, and I said she had fallen down, which was true enough; but I did not tell you how a viper was lying under the bushes watching her gathering sticks; *forestieri* (foreigners) do not believe these things. But, Signora, you know how a little bird flutters and trembles and twitters when the serpent's eye is on it, and then lies still while that one comes close—closer. And if the bird feels the effect of this influence of venom, then why not you and I?"

It was the first time which I had realized a belief I now know to be common among Italian peasants—a belief which doubtless has its roots deep down in pagan soil. For a moment I was nonplussed. Then an inspiration came to me.

"It must be, Nina," I said, "because you and I have not the faith of San Giulio."

In all ages men have been driven by the spirit into the

wilderness, and thereby have saved their souls from extinction by the choking cares and pleasures of the world. The stronger, after a season of retreat, return with fresh stores of energy to the service of their fellow-men; the weaker are captured and held by the wondrous fascination of close, uninterrupted contact with Nature, and fear to break the unruffled calm of mind, the repose of nerves induced by the withdrawal from the jars and frets of human intercourse. San Giulio was perhaps of this hermit temperament; or, perhaps, with a prevision of his approaching end he wished, like Prospero, to "retire into his cell." Certainly the missionary zeal which had brought him to Novara evaporated as he settled down to the solitary's life; certainly, also, he lived it for two years only; for in 392 or 393 he died, and was buried in the little chapel he had built with his own hands. At what date he took posthumous possession of the entire lake we do not know; but a grant of the Emperor Otto I., dated 962, made to the Canons of San Giulio: "actum in Villa quæ dicitur Horta, prope *lacuno ejusdem Sancti Julii* feliciter." It grants to the Canons of San Giulio—a proof of the existence of the island Basilica—certain lands as a thankoffering for a victory gained over Berengarius, King of Italy. Berengarius had not only wrested Orta from its rightful feudal lord, the Bishop of Novara, but had poisoned Otho's son Litolfus, who had tried to make him give it up. The father made a punitive expedition, and the cowardly Berengarius fled before his approach. The wife, Willa, was braver. She held out for two months, and fragments of her wall of defence—the Muro della Regina—still exist. The Emperor was too strong for her, however; the Riviera di Orta was returned to ecclesiastical hands, and as late as 1787 the ecclesiastical Court of Novara declared it a penal offence to call the lake —according to new-fangled French usage—the Lago d'Orta instead of by its clerically authorized title of Lago di San Giulio.

We have certainly no desire to commit that offence. The whirligig of Time has brought the secular name into

fashion, but it is far less appropriate than that used in the tenth century. The lake owes its distinctive charm, not to the little town of Orta, but to its "gem-like island," to use the happy phrase of Mr. Addington Symonds. And the peculiar picturesqueness of this isle, so different from those which are reckoned the beauty spots of Maggiore, comes from the piling up in a restricted circumference of ancient buildings, buildings whose presence is entirely due—strange irony of history—to the Solitary who fled thither to avoid the haunts of men.

If we row up the lake from the prosperous little manufacturing town of Omegna at its northern end—and this way of arrival is much to be recommended—the beautiful lake seems comparatively uninteresting, until we sight the island. At first it appears to recede coyly from us. We count a hundred oar-strokes—we are no nearer; another hundred, and we seem even more distant. But at length it stands still, and lets itself be approached.

In its arresting picturesqueness it deserves the name of Isola Bella better than the somewhat vulgar, tourist-haunted garden on Maggiore; but it is not, as are the Borromean Islands, overtly stamped with nationality. If a hydroplane dropped us, after a blindfold journey, in the middle of either of the three lakes, we should feel the *Italianità* of our surroundings the second the bandage was raised. But if we descended in the middle of Lake Orta, Bavaria, Tyrol, Savoy might occur to us as possible locations, until we had time to observe that the woods which clothe the lower hills are of chestnut. The surrounding *paesi* do not crouch upon the shore like those of the other lakes, or display obviously the gay colouring, the wide logge, the arches and steep passages of the lake-side villages of Lugano, Como, and Maggiore. Even the island does not give us a lead. Instead of the tall cypresses which pierce the blue of typical Italian landscape, we have here dark firs, suggestive of the North, and the straight and simple lines of the big white building—the Seminary, replacing an older fort—which forms the apex of the grey cone of masonry have a curiously French aspect,

But when our boat touches the shore, and, passing beneath a marble portico, we find ourselves in the single narrow, roughly-paved street which encircles the island's small circumference, when we note the garden patches—gay and fragrant with roses, wistarias and catalpas, magnolias, geraniums, oleanders and trailing vines—squeezed between the little villas which ring the lake, when above all we enter the porch of the ancient church, then we know that we are indeed in Italy.

It is a miniature Basilica, complete and perfect in every point, even to its *matroneum* or women's gallery. At first in its warm dimness we are conscious only of enveloping colour; then, as the eye grows accustomed to the dusk, we begin to make out the shapes and subject of the quaint frescoes which cover the walls and pillars, sometimes also the scribblings which appear on and round about them. Some of them are records concerning plagues and tempests and other important happenings of long past days, going back to the fifteenth century. And as we look at these interesting defacements we note the unalterable propensities of idle hands, and faintly hope that certain similar modern vandalisms may gain through kindly Time a like atoning value.

The frescoes of the walls and ceiling in one of the chapels are by the excellent contemporary of Luini, Gaudenzio Ferrari, whose best work may be seen in his birthplace, the not far distant mountain town of Varallo. The Virgin surrounded by Saints; the four Evangelists above the four Prophets in the cupola; on the pillars St. Michael and Apollonius, St. Giulio and one of his companions, probably his brother: these are the subjects of frescoes, which cover earlier paintings. One cannot help wishing that, like Tintoretto's Last Judgment in the Doge's Palace in Venice, they could be carefully removed, and the primitive work beneath be brought again to light. And since the church has been declared a national monument, it seems not impossible that this investigation may one day take place.

Two notable objects in the nave are a Romanesque

Photo Brunner] [*Como*

THE CASTLE OF SIRMIONE ON LAKE GARDA.

pulpit and a marble Sarcophagus. The latter—now used as a most capacious alms-box—is inscribed with the letters MERNUL: and it is supposed that the headless skeleton it contained when discovered in 1697 was that of one Mernulphus, Governor of the island in 575, who was beheaded by the Lombard King Agilulf.

The black marble pulpit is younger, yet it dates from the eighth or ninth century. One of the supporting serpentine capitals is carved with interlacing circles, resembling Scandinavian work. The panels are sculptured not only with the conventional symbols of the four Evangelists—the ox, the man, the eagle, and the winged lion—but also with sundry griffons, crocodiles, and other strange creatures, which, according to local tradition, represent the earliest inhabitants of the island. As an irrefragable proof of their existence a fossil bone is exhibited in the Sacristry, together with the before-mentioned charter of Otto I. and some fine old vestments.

The choir stalls of dark polished walnut, carved with conventional designs in low relief, are exceedingly pleasant to look on; which is perhaps more than can be said of the shrine of crystal and silver in the Confession—the subterranean chamber beneath the High Altar—which contains the bones of San Giulio. For thirteen centuries his body lay where it was originally buried on the highest point of the island; but in 1697 it was exhumed and a little later deposited in its present position.

After fulfilling an act of pious visitation to the shrine, we are glad to find ourselves again in the open air. The *Inverna*—the southerly wind which rises regularly in normal weather about noon, and which impeded our progress as we rowed up the lake—has now dropped to a zephyr. The water lapping the island shores has turned to emerald—Dante's

> " Fresco smera do a l'ora che si fiacca "—

and the reflections of the little villas prolong themselves indefinitely in the green and limpid depths.

As we enter our boat we see a fisherman pushing off

in his. Fish are rising—and so are our hopes of having some for supper; and most especially could we fancy one of those pink-fleshed salmon trout which in Lake Orta sometimes reach the weight of 12 to 25 pounds.

A fifteen minutes' pull brings us to the little town on the eastern shore opposite the island. Between the lake and steep wooded background there is room only for one long street, broken by a little Piazetta. The lake-side houses thrust out terraces above the waves, sheltered by rust-red awnings. The villas on the slopes in the rear emerge from shady thickets of azaleas and rhododendrons, ranging in hue from straw to salmon pink, from carmine to purple; or peer from snowdrifts of acacia blossom; or grow grey beside the brilliant youth, the clear rose-red of oleanders. The high parkland, laid out in green glades fenced with clipped laurel, immediately above the little town, is one of the many *Sacri Monti* of Italian lakeland. It has the usual punctuation of chapels with life-sized terra-cotta groups, and the church on the summit; but it differs from all the rest which depict, often with painful realism, scenes from Christ's life and passion, in that it tells the story of St. Francis and his companions. It is, in fact, an illustrated edition of that most naïve and entrancing of human documents, the Fioretti. Some of the groups have considerable artistic value: all are interesting as studies in the costume and manners, not of the times of St. Francis, but of the seventeenth century when they were erected.

If the inexorable railway time-table puts limits to our ramble, we may break from the mile of Pilgrims' Way on the side of the mount furthest from the lake, and take a short downward cut to the station, which serves the inhabitants both of Orta and the adjacent *paese* of Miasina.

But those more fortunate travellers who pitch their nightly tents beside the lake will linger on the summit looking down on the hotel, rightly called Belvedere, and down into the little lake lying tranquil and shadowed in the dark bowl of the mountains. In the very perfection and uniformity of its beauty it sometimes seems

Photo] [*Ballance*

ON LAKE MAGGIORE.

monotonous; and the calm, grey days, so full of sweetness on Como and of majesty on neighbouring Maggiore, are fraught with a cold melancholy on Orta. The little lake is a beauty who rejoices in warmth and colour, and daring effects of light and shade. She asks for the effulgence of hot afternoons, for brilliant dawns, for the magic of the full moon. Perhaps she is at her fairest as we survey her now, in the glows and mists of a warm evening. The forms of the chestnuts and walnuts on the further shore are motionless, massed, and vague. The hillside villages are pale blocks against a blue, blurred background. Behind us is the dark ridge of Mottarone; before us, lifted far aloft, are giant peaks still smitten by the sun. But the light upon them fades to pallid rose, to purple, blue, and then to misty grey. The evening air is penetrated with a peace such as the other lakes, alas! now scarcely know. The throb of motors, so insistent around Como, is rarely heard beside the waters of little Orta. The touring automobilist finds it off his prescribed track. It is one of the few remaining corners of Italy still sequestered from the noise of modern progress.

CHAPTER XIV

THE EASTERN SHORE OF LAKE GARDA, AND RIVA

"Dolce tra i vini udir lontane istorie
D'atavi, mentre il divo sol precipita
E le pie stelle sopra noi viaggino
E tra l'onde e le fronde laura mormora."

(Sweet it is among the vines to listen to ancient tales of our forefathers, while the divine sun pours down, and the sacred stars journey above us and between the wave and the leafy branches the breeze murmurs.)—CARDUCCI, from "Deserzano."

Some Towns and Castles.

THE writer and the tourist are sometimes to be pitied. The first constantly suffers from limitations of space, the second from limitations of time; and on both is laid the burden of selection. It would be so pleasant to row indefinitely around the lake, landing to photograph some interesting bit of church or street architecture, climbing to hill villages with enchanting names and prospects, or making pilgrimages to craggy sanctuaries, such as the Madonna di Moncastello, or the Madonna di Corona—Our Lady of the Crown—above the town of Garda. Pleasant, too, would it be to botanize on the slopes of majestic Monte Baldo; or leisurely to note the exotic vegetation, not only of gardens, but of the hillsides, where Indian figs, aloes, and capers grow wild; or to satisfy the eye, week in, week out, with the strange contrasts, the sudden colours, the ever-changing cloud effects of the northern end of the lake. But alas! instead of this long-drawn-out enjoyment we are compelled to choose, and to view in haste, a few spots upon the lake which we should blush to leave unseen.

First we will visit the little town, huddled in a sheltered bay on the eastern shore, which has lent its name to the lake.

The Romans knew this great sheet of water which formed so convenient a high-road to the passes of Trent

as Benacus, and Benaco it was called by early mediæval Italy in general. The why and wherefore of that appellation is unknown. There is a popular tradition that a city called Benacus lies submerged in the lake; but no Roman writer mentions this mythical city; nor was it a Latin usage thus to extend the area of a city name. The term *stagnum Gardæ*, which we first find in the Chronicle of Otto of Freisinga, Frederick Barbarossa's uncle, was a German invention of the twelfth century; but only by slow degrees did the foreigners' names supersede the euphonious Benacus. Dante uses both *Benaco* and *Garda;* and the emergence and victory of the latter name is a convincing proof that what is to-day a rather squalid village was once the most outstanding place upon the lake.

Under the Carolingians it formed a separate county with territory stretching to the Adige, and entire independence of Verona; and in a document of 904 it is called a city. A little later in the same century it was the scene of a real life drama, as thrilling as any film play. The heroine is the beautiful and virtuous Adelheid, widow of Lother, King of Italy. The villain is Berengarius, Marquess of Ivrea, who, having murdered Lother, seeks the hand of Adelheid; not for himself (as Mr. Baghot states), his own wife being vigorously alive, but for his son and heir. Adelheid, declining the alliance, is kidnapped by Berengarius and secretly conveyed to the Castle or *Rocca* of Garda. A certain Fra Martino fills the rôle of heroic rescuer. Various versions are given concerning the means and methods by which he smuggled the Queen out of her prison; but all of them land her, after many hairbreadth escapes, in the Castle of Canossa, famous hereafter in another story. She invokes the protection of Otto I., the Saxon King of Germany. He appears, defeats Berengarius, crowns Adelheid Queen of Italy in Pavia, and completes the romance by wedding her himself. A decade later the happy pair return to Italy and are crowned in Rome: and there and then the Holy Roman Empire, based on the union of the German and Italian crowns, is launched on its eventful career.

Lake Garda and Riva

A century later Garda was again a focus of excitement. The Emperor Frederick Barbarossa descended upon Italy by the valley of the Adige, and was greeted by the Riviera with cordial submission. Garda and its eighteen dependent communes was, however, recalcitrant. It alone of all the Lombard cities refused to bow to the Imperial power. Turisendo, who held the fee from his uncle, Bishop of Verona, shut himself into the Rocca and swore he would never yield his independence. He did yield, of course, but after a year's siege, on honourable terms. Nevertheless, before long we find the Gardasana in the hands of Albert, Bishop of Trent. It is just at this period, when Garda is naturally notorious in Germany, that the application of its name to the entire lake begins to be made in German and Tridentine documents.

No more proper setting for tales of mediæval chivalry and crime could be imagined than this "city" with its ancient circuit of walls, and its dark, narrow, tortuous main street, broken by downward trending alleys which disclose here and there a lovely vista of the lake. Nothing in this shrunk and decayed remnant of the once capital city would seem to have been changed for eight centuries. So mediæval is the atmosphere, it almost seems profane to mention that Garda is to-day linked to Verona by a light railway, and that an old inn, La Locanda, at the point of the bay called after the missionary and martyr bishop, St. Virgilio, has recently been brought up to date, as regards sanitation and management, without detriment to its logge overhanging the lake and its generally old-world character. Close by are the delightful grounds of Villa Brenzano, which are open to the public.

Only a fragment of the *Rocca* of Garda remains; but the neighbourhood boasts of three well-preserved fortresses which can scarcely be matched in all Italy. Sirmione we will visit later. But Lazise may easily be reached from Garda by means of the subsidiary steamer service which has its terminus at Peschiera. It is a huge square battlemented block, and in general aspect reminds one somewhat of Carnarvon Castle, though the beautiful forms

Prof. G. H. Bryan, F.R.S.]

(1) ISOLA BELLA.

In the background is the Sasso Grande.

(2) A PORTICOED STREET IN LOCARNO.

of its crenellated flanking towers have no English parallels. It is now the property of the Conte Bernini. The walled arsenal and harbour of Lazise, an opulent town in its day, had considerable importance under Venetian rule. They have now been earthed up, and converted to a garden. Close by is the little Romanesque Church of St. Nicholas, with *quattrocento* frescoes.

The strongest of the three fortresses, Malcesine, stands on a promontory of the rocky coast beneath Monte Baldo; and before the invention of long-range artillery must have been quite impregnable. It commands the approaches to Venetia from the Austrian Alps, and under Venetian rule was the station of the Venetian officer called the Captain of the Lake. It was when sketching here that Goethe was arrested, and nearly imprisoned as an Austrian spy. Both the castle and the surrounding country are certainly provocative to the artist, a special feature of beauty being the twisted forms of the unusually old olive-trees.

The progress of science has outrun that of civilization. The methods of offensive and defensive warfare represented by these castles are obsolete; but human passions and ambitions have altered little through the centuries. Did the spirit of some old Captain of the Lake waken to the thunder of the cannon among the peaks high above Malcesine? And did the methods, the distant devastations of twentieth-century warfare seem to the poor ghost the result of hideous and unlawful arts? Yet the skill of Italy's engineers and the physical endurance of her mountain troops would have been no new things to him, for was not the next village, Torbole, six miles to the north, the scene of a fifteenth-century engineering feat which, for audacity of conception and hardihood in execution, was scarcely surpassed by any episode of the recent war.

Brescia in the year 1468 was "straightly shut up" by the Visconti, and called on Venice for aid. Venice was willing, but impotent, for the Visconti were occupying the Gardasana, as well as the plain near Peschiera known

as the Lugana. Then a Greek sailor had an idea; and, wild though it seemed, it was adopted by the Senate. Twenty-five vessels and six galleys were navigated up the Adige, dragged overland up and to the top of Monte Baldo; and from there were actually lowered over the precipitous rock and launched in the lake at Torbole. The enterprise cost the Republic 1500 ducats.

At Torbole we find the most ancient Church of Benaco, and an old establishment of pisciculture. The fascinating village is renowned for the excellence of its fruit and the superexcellence of its trout, caught at the mouth of the chief of Garda's feeders, the River Sarca. Readers of Goethe's Italian letters may recollect his account of the trout-netting. Torbole is singularly isolated from every place on the lake save Riva—like itself but recently redeemed—to which it is linked by a good shore road covered by those forts on Monte Brione which seemed entirely to secure the Austrian position.

The outlines of Riva are those which the Romans traced; and here, as in every other town on the lake, there is abundant lapidary witness to the stately and ordered life of the Roman period. Scaligers, Visconti, Carraresi, Counts of Tirol, Venetians, in turn possessed and lost it. In 1521 it was bestowed by Charles V. on the Bishop of Trent, and led a less fluctuating but more insignificant existence till the last of these ecclesiastical princes was expelled by Napoleon in 1800. In the middle of the nineteenth century, under Austrian officials, it became extremely enterprising; and with its shady promenades, its well-kept hotels and restaurants, its numerous public institutions, it was undoubtedly the leading and most up-to-date place upon the lake. It was frightfully damaged by the long-range guns of the Italians; but the speed and energy with which repairs and rebuilding were undertaken augurs well for this new phase of its story. Now that it is wholly theirs, Italians dub it the Pearl of Benaco; and certainly its climate and situation at the head of the lake, narrowed to river-like proportions between wild and abrupt heights, endow it with certain peculiar

fascinations. The valleys which break its rocky background offer an endless series of walks and excursions, which are or were facilitated by public motor services.

Several little lakes, somewhat resembling highland lochs in character, lie in the folds of the hills. The Lago d'Idro has special attractions for the angler, the Lago di Loppio for the artist; while the Lago di Tenno gleams among pastures which in spring are enamelled with the gayest flowers. The stock sights of the neighbourhood are the cascade of Varrone, falling from a height of 180 feet with "sound and fury" through a rocky chasm; and the falls of the Ponato, approached by a wonderful rock-hewn, tunnelling road, constructed in 1850.

The most noticeable buildings in the town are the early thirteenth-century tower called Apponale; the Palazzo Pretorio, representing the Scaliger period; the present Municipio, once the residence of the Venetian Proveditore; and the somewhat over-sumptuous yet eminently effective Church of the Inviolata.

Riva is connected, by a light railway running to Mori, with the main Brenner line.

CHAPTER XV

THE WESTERN SHORE OF LAKE GARDA

LIMONE, Tremosine, Campione—could one hear sweeter names than those of the first halting-places of the steamers which ply between Riva and Desenzano along the western shore? Limone lives up to its appellation, for here the barren grandeur of a rock-bound coast first breaks into blossom, and the white pillars of the lemon *campi* gleam from the terraced hills.

Tremosine stands at the edge of a fertile plateau over a thousand feet above its port, and sometimes appears from the steamer deck as though suspended in mid-air. The old perpendicular zig-zag by which it was formerly approached is now replaced by a fine new military road; but merchandise is still drawn up expeditiously by a primitive wire rope hauler.

The verdant promontory of Campione breaks the grim severity of the mountain's sheer and pathless descent into the lake. It is formed by the alluvium of the River Tignale, which splits it into unequal halves; and many Dante commentators believe it to be his spot in the middle of Garda where

> "... the Brescian pastor
> And he of Trent and he too of Verona
> Might make the sign, if he should take that journey."

That is to say, that down to 1775 the Tignale parted the dioceses of Brescia and Trent, while the entire lake was considered to belong to the Bishop of Verona.

Presently we come to Gargnano, a busy little town, with some industrial life and a peculiarly delightful water frontage of rich, green garden foliage and houses, no two alike in form or size or colour, bathing their feet in the Lake. Those who alight here must visit the lovely Franciscan cloister, with its capitals sculptured with oranges and lemons—an allusion to the popular belief that

these fruits were first brought into cultivation on the lake by the Franciscans.

At Gargnano the Riviera begins. The mountains recede, and the space between them and the water, earthed with moraine deposit, is verdant, fertile, and more or less cultivated. An excellent road, tempting to motorists and cyclists, now skirts the lake the whole way to Desenzano. And here, perhaps, we may note in passing that both will do well to join that wonderfully efficient organization, the Italian Touring Club, which, for a modest subscription (payable at the Italian railways, Waterloo Place) furnishes the traveller with all sorts of privileges and information, as well as with excellent periodicals.

Bogliaco, the next stopping-place, is dominated by the great crags of Monte Castello, and the Gù, barren above, clad with vines and olives below. Here there is an hotel catering for English guests, even to providing golf-links, a most satisfying and ever-varying view of Monte Baldo, and one of the most magnificent villas on the lake. Palazzo Bettoni, designed early in the eighteenth century by the Veronese architect Cristofoli, has a lovely garden, with all sorts of rare plants, extending upwards to the hills.

Presently another promontory, pushed out by another detritus-laden river, breaks the even coast-line, and in the curving bays on either side of the Camerate delta we see Toscalano and Maderno. Each in their day was reckoned the chief town of the Riviera, while the northernmost, Toscalano, was undoubtedly the principal Roman settlement on the lake. Its destruction by some landslide or seismic convulsion probably gave rise to the legend of a submerged city named Benacus.

Maderno is the only town of the Riviera which has preserved its tall column surmounted by the winged lion of St. Mark, symbol of the rule of Venice. Here, too, there is a noteworthy church dedicated to St. Andrew, rebuilt in the twelfth century, and woefully "improved" by St. Carlo Borromeo. It now awaits a real restoration, having been declared a National Monument.

Western Shore of Lake Garda

In the year 1377 Beatrice Regina della Scala, who had married Bernabò Visconti, appeared on the Riviera—which had probably been bestowed on her as a dowry—and summarily transferred the seat of government from Maderno to Salò, which at the same time she fortified with walls and towers. Henceforth the Riviera—which comprised some thirty-four communes—is frequently called after its capital the Riviera di Salò, though its proper name was the Magnifica Patria della Riviera. It was tenacious as to this title, and particularly objected to being called the Brescian Riviera; so that in some ancient tomes we find the adjective Bresciana scored out and Benacense written in.

Its political head under the Visconti was called the Captain-Rector: he it was who entertained Isabella d'Este when she made her joyful expeditions from Mantua to the lake. Under the Venetians a Venetian patrician presided, with the title of *Provveditore*. The office, held for sixteen months, was much sought after because—so the dear old gossiping diarist Sanudo tells us—its holder was so independent as practically "to be answerable only to God Almighty." But the Venetian Senate doubtless knew pretty well what was taking place. Twice a week, we know, a messenger journeyed with despatches between Venice and Salò; and furthermore the Magnifica Patria had its Nunzio or representative with his own residence or "consulate" in Venice, and he actually on state occasions took precedence of the Nunzi of Crema, Treviso, and Rovigo.

A light railway connects Salò with Brescia, but it is from the lake that it should always be approached for the first time. No longer, indeed, does it show the alluring aspect it presented to Carducci in 1879, "joyous as a child holding out her fair arms as she abandons herself, scattering flowers, to the dance, her tresses and veil streaming in the breeze"; but rather as a staid, dignified, handsome, and opulent matron. For the tortuous line of ancient houses of all shapes and hues and styles, with sunny *logge* and dark *cavalcavie*, terraces, water stairs and

boat-houses, roofed and screened with vines and gay with roses and geraniums, carried on piles right into the lake—all this old-world Salò, colourful, picturesque, irregular and insanitary, was demolished by the violent earthquake of 1901. Though one cannot but regret Salò's sudden break with its architectural past, especially the destruction of its ancient clock tower resembling that of the Piazza in Venice, it must be admitted that the modern *lungo lago*, the esplanade along the quay, is a delightful spot in which to walk on a sunny winter morning or a hot May evening. For hot it is in May upon this Riviera, and the hotels which cater for foreigners are all closed by June. The Veronese shore is considerably cooler.

Fortunately the earthquake left the Cathedral of Salò intact. Begun in the middle of the *quattrocento*, it must have been nearly completed in 1483 when Marin Sanudo pronounced it "magnificent and excellent." We cannot better his adjectives; and though the original design of the Paduan, Delle Vacche, has suffered at different periods from capricious "improvements," and the interior is chargeable with an excess of gilding, the whole effect of the triple nave, the massive pillars, the polygonal apse, the cupola painted by Palma Giovane, is nobly impressive. In the last chapel on the right should be noted a crucifix, pronounced by Mantegna the most beautiful in Italy.

Outside we have a beautiful and stately central portal, ascribed to Sansovino, in an unfinished façade—no infrequent feature of Italian churches. Above is a beautiful rose window. The other two windows are alterations of a kind from which the building is now happily protected by being declared a National Monument. Throughout the *settecento*, Salò Cathedral was renowned for the splendour of its ecclesiastical processions, notably the great Good Friday procession, when, says the historian Grattarolo, "five thousand candles were carried." Its music, too, both then and at a much earlier date, was reckoned of peculiar excellence. In the *cinquecento* it was proud of two of its musicians, the brothers Bartolotti, who were proficient players on the violin of that period. And the

violin in its modern form is the invention of the elder Bartolotti's son, who is known to the world as Gasparo of Salò.

Locally his fame is commemorated by the street called Via de' Violini, and by a poetically conceived marble bas-relief in the Palazzo Communale, by the sculptor Angelo Zanelli.

In the suburb of Salò, called from the river which there flows into the lake Barbarano, is a great palace, which makes special appeal to the attention of English tourists. Its owner is an Englishwoman, *née* Carrington, widow of Count Martinengo-Cesaresco: it is described with enthusiasm in one of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters to her daughter, Lady Bute; and it is the scene of a tragedy by the English dramatist, Webster. It was built at the close of the *cinquecento* by Marchese Sforza Pallavicino, Venetian Commander-in-Chief, and in 1585 was a refuge for the Duke of Bracciano and his bride, the beautiful Vittoria Accoramboni. The Duke, head of the Roman Orsini, had murdered both his own first wife and Vittoria's first husband, a nephew of Cardinal Peretti, who, unfortunately for the guilty pair, was afterwards raised to the papal chair as Sixtus V. The Pontiff showed no intention of forgetting the crime he had apparently forgiven as Cardinal, and Venice and Garda seemed safer residences than Rome and Bracciano. Then the Duke died suddenly, leaving his property away from his first wife's heirs; and the vengeance of the insulted family was swift and sure. The beautiful "White Devil" did, indeed, effect an escape from the Martinengo Palace; but at Padua, on her way to claim protection from the Republic of Venice, she was overtaken and done to death.

In the middle of the seventeenth century the Palace came into possession of the Cesaresco branch of the Martinenghi—a family of whom it has been said that "the history of Brescia for a thousand years could not be written without reference to them." Count Camillo Martinengo-Cesaresco was a forceful, arbitrary, turbulent person, resembling, it would seem, a Rhenish baron or

Photo Brunner] [*Como*

THE MADONNA DI MONTE CASTELLO.

May be reached from Tignale or from Campione on the western shore of Garda.

Scottish border chieftain more than a normal Italian nobleman of the *seicento*. So deeply did he impress his personality on the Riviera he terrorized, that the palace is still called by the populace *El Palaz del Cont Camil.* And, indeed, with good reason; for. according to the testamentary direction of the arbitrary Count, every inheritor of the palace must assume the name Camillo.

The grounds of Palazzo Martinengo with their shady avenues, their elaborately carved fountains, their statues and kiosks, their laurel groves, their cypresses, their clumps of lemons and magnolias, their glowing oleanders, their incomparable prospects of the wide blue gulf and the grand lines of the Baldo chain, must be numbered among the most beautiful of Italian gardens.

Close by the Palazzo, the Barbarano Ravine cleaves the mountain chain which screens the Riviera so comfortably from winter winds. Among these hills the good walker may enjoy a great variety of easy climbs, while for excursions by road, rail, or water no better centre can be found than Salò. In calm weather a rowing boat can be taken to Sirmione or the Isola di Garda, to which the steamer will, of course, convey us in less time; or we may journey in a steam tram to Brescia, or to Maderno and Toscolano; or, again, we may drive or motor to Desenzano through the fertile vineyard district known as the Valtenese, stopping to view the ancient Benedictine church and monastery of Maguzzano, once the richest and most splendid religious house upon the lake; the ruined castle and Roman remains of Padenghe, and the stately *seicento* villa at Moniga possessed by the well-known Italian historian Pompeo Molmenti.

Desenzano lies upon the lake in the western of the two lobes into which Benaco swells at its southern end, and which are parted by the peninsula of Sirmione. It is the starting point of the principal steamer service, and a little branch railway connects it with its station on the main line to Milan.

A great deal of history has been made at this south-west end of the lake. It has been the battlefield of many peoples

and parties, Romans and Goths, Lombards and Venetians, Austrians and French and Italians. Here, too, must have been the first human settlements after the glacial epoch. The valuable collection of fossilized bones and Stone Age implements, drawn from the peat between Desenzano and Lonato in 1873, was in 1897 sold to the State and removed to Rome.

The castle—now a barrack—and the market square of Desenzano are the two main foci of its history. The castle was probably constructed on the site of a Roman fortress, about the tenth century; as a defence against the Hungarians. In 1567 a little church and 124 dwellings existed within its fortification; these dwellings belonged to families in the neighbourhood who fled to the stronghold in times of war and tumult.

The weekly market preserves the tradition of the great Roman granaries of *Decentia*. Throughout the Middle Ages it was considered the chief grain market in North Italy. Under Venetian rule it was extraordinarily frequented, and the building known as *la Patria* was set apart for the magistrates who took it in turn to administer the market law, affixed stamps and seals to bills and contracts, and saw that no foreigner was allowed to purchase before local needs had been supplied. Till the end of the *quattrocento* the market day was Monday; then to avoid Sunday travelling and preparations it was changed to Tuesday. On Tuesday it is still held, and though modern economic conditions have deprived it of its ancient renown, it remains one of the chief of Lombard markets.

The church of Sta. Maria Maddalena should be visited on account of its fine Tiepolo—a very striking Last Supper.

The crescent-shaped island, about a kilometre in length, to-day called simply l'Isola di Garda, was for a long period of its history known as the Friars' Isle. After the mental pictures of passion, bloodshed and strife evoked by castles and city walls and towers, it is pleasant to linger in a spot full of memories of holy peace and cultured leisure. Here

Roman patricians enjoyed the delights of their villas. Here monks from the great Monastery of San Zeno in Verona, to whom Charlemagne granted the island, may have sojourned for rest and meditation. Here, in 1220, St. Francis of Assisi purchased a site which, in its beauty and remoteness, must have been entirely to his taste, and a little community of *Minori Osservanti* was established in a modest hermitage. Here, according to tradition, they entertained a distinguished visitor—the exiled Dante Alighieri, who delighted to engage them in theological disputations. In the middle of the *cinquecento* the fiery preacher St. Bernardino of Siena recruited his spiritual and physical strength by a prolonged solitary sojourn in a cave at the other end of the island. He it was who incited the friars to an enlargement of their house and more thorough cultivation of their land; so that the island, with its capacious buildings—cloisters, church, gardens, and amphitheatre for students—became the scene of a flourishing theological school, directed by Francesco dei Lechi, a Brescian noble, known in religion as Padre Lecheto. The monastery was suppressed in the eighteenth century, and after some changes of tenure returned in 1817 to the Lechi in the person of Count Luigi Lechi of Brescia. He found the entire estate in a condition of chaotic decay; he made it a place of sumptuous beauty, the gardens less costly in upkeep, perhaps, than those of the more pretentious Isola Bella of Maggiore, but infinitely more exquisite.

As the eventful century wore on, l'Isola became the meeting-place of the patriotic secret societies which had ramifications throughout the district. A police raid during the Count's absence led to the discovery of a printing-press and compromising documents, and there followed sixteen years of the petty persecution known as police surveillance, till, harassed beyond endurance, the Count in 1832 left the island for good.

After various vicissitudes it passed as part of the dowry of a daughter of Duke De Ferrari of Genoa to its present energetic and liberal owner, Prince Scipione, head of the

great Roman family of Borghese, who in the annals of automobilism will always be remembered for his sporting and adventurous journey from Pekin to Paris.

All around the island are strewn, submerged or partially submerged, islets and rocks. Once they must have been united and formed a connection between it and the mainland, such as we now behold in the isthmus, two and a half miles in length, which separates the bays of Desenzano and Peschiera. In the case of Sirmione the division between island and isthmus is still scarcely perceptible, and a bridge binds the two together.

East of the island there rises in the lake a warm sulphur spring, locally called *Boiolo*. It is possible that it was known to, and used by, those inveterate bath-finders, the Romans; but only since 1897 has it been brought by a pipe—985 feet in length—to the new bath-house of Sirmione, which in consequence is now reckoned a watering-place, with good hotel accommodation and a summer season. Owing to its position, it is considerably cooler than other places on Lake Garda, and it has no mosquitoes.

The varied and quaintly mingled styles of building in the narrow over-arched streets and little piazza of Sirmione indicate to the student of architecture some of the vicissitudes of its story; but only two phases of its past have impressed themselves vividly on the popular imagination—the days of Imperial Rome and the age of the mediæval Despots.

The castle, with its great moat, its three entrances, its immensely thick walls and solid foundations, its strong towers, its unrivalled position, commanding the bays both of Peschiera and Desenzano, and the roads to Milan and Brescia, must have contributed not a little to the Scaliger power, and would suffice to call the foreigner to Sirmione even if the isthmus-island offered no other allurement.

Hither, according to ancient tradition, came Dante, when the guest of the ruling family at Verona; and the poet Carducci stamped that tradition on the imaginations

Photo Brunner] [*Como*

CASA MORANDI.

A picturesque old house with outside staircases in Baveno. Below on the street is a little shrine.

of his countrymen by linking it with a quotation from the "Divine Comedy" to which their patriotism had long attached a prophetic significance:

"Un grande severo s'affaccia a la torre scaligera.
Suso in Italia bella—sorridendo ei mormora, e guarda l'acque, la terre a l'aere."

(A grand and severe face looks forth from the Scaligers' tower.
"Up in fair Italy," he murmurs, smiling, and gazes on the land, the water, the blue air.)

Ruskin, when dealing with the tombs of the Scaligers at Verona, has reminded us how "the entirely believed religion" of Dante's day gave on the one hand "joy, courtesy, and hope, and a lovely peace in death"—thereby producing "the highest development of Italian character and chivalry"—and on the other, as the defect of its quality, the spirit of persecution. In hell, in the circle of the "sowers of scandals and schism," close to Mahomet, we meet a certain Fra Dolcino, leader in the early *trecento* of one of the forms of political and religious dissent to which the Lake of Garda seemed peculiarly prone. Nor can any reader of the "Inferno" doubt that Dante would have regarded with stern approbation an incident which took place in his infancy, and which was certainly one of the grimmest happenings ever witnessed by the grim castle.

The story is related with incomparable simplicity by Messer Torello Saragna in his "History of the Veronese" (1544):

"And because through the continuance of wars and civil strife, many great abuses and heresies had sprung up in the Veronese territory, it was determined in the Council to eradicate that evil root. So in the year 1276, by command of the citizens in authority, the Bishop of Verona and Fra Filippo Bonaccolsi, the Inquisitor of Mantua, with Master Pinamonte, father of the said Inquisitor and Podestà of Verona, and lastly Master Alberto della Scala, brother and Vice-regent of Mastino,

Captain of Verona, went with an armed troop to Sirmione Peninsula of the Lake of Garda, and proceeded briskly against these said heretics and bad Christians, as well of Sirmione as of the surrounding villages and castles. Where they discovered a good hundred men and women, erring and incorrigible. And they had them all burned in the aforesaid place, as an example to others."

Some, however, would seem to have been taken as prisoners to Verona, with a hope, perhaps, that they would recant; for another Chronicler, De Romano, informs us that on a February Sunday in 1278 about 200 Patarenes of those captured in Sirmione were burnt in the Arena at Verona. Well may Ruskin declare that when Christianity, "which is a religion of mercy and truth, corrupts," "it corrupts into its reverse; and there is no cruelty like the cruelty of Christians, and no fallacy like their falsehood."

It is a relief to turn from the castle, symbol of mediæval barbarity, to the happier and really deeper vestiges left by pagan civilization. Sirmione, lying near the great road, the Gallica, was an important Roman *Mansio*, a place of halt for the Imperial *Speculatores*, the postal couriers; and the Cortine—the highest of the three hills which correspond with the island's three angles—was certainly the site of a Roman town. The pillars of the present Cathedral Church have stood in a pagan temple; and of two Roman harbours, one on the western side is used at the present day. And then there are the immense ruins, extending into the lake, traditionally called the Grottoes of Catullus.

Whether they, indeed, represent the foundations of the poet's paternal villa, wherein, "with his Bithynian bark moored below to the glistening rocks," he dallied long, amorous days with treacherous Lesbia; or whether, as some archæologists hold, these "grottoes" are the remains of public baths of the time of Constantine, possibly supplied by the sulphur spring, is really of little consequence. In either case they are witnesses to the wealth and amenity of Roman life lived in this island, nor can any archæo-

logical discovery rob us of the knowledge, conveyed by Catullus himself, as to his affection for this enchanting spot:

> "Salve o venusta Sirmio atque hero gaude
> Gaudete vosque Lydiae lacus undae
> Ridete quidquid est domi cachinnorum."

This is his pæan of joy at home-coming from Bithynia to the lake, for which, when absent, he craved as Pliny craved for his villas upon the Larian shore. And as we linger on the slopes carpeted with wild thyme and clothed with silvery, sylph-like olives; as we look down into the translucent waves, shimmering, gem-like, over the pale rocks; or over the majestic length of translucent azure modulations; or far away to the mountains Virgil knew, "blue above the level reeds of Mincio," we yield our sympathy to the rapture of the Roman singer, and our judgment to that of the modern Italian poet who pronounces Sirmione the "flower and gem of all peninsulas."

CHAPTER XVI

SOME CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF GARDA AND ITS PEOPLE

"Fluctibus et fremitu assurgens, Benace, marino."—VIRGIL ("Georgics").

A STRANGER introduced successively to several members of a family seizes at first on the features common to them all; but on further acquaintance his perception of individual traits becomes increasingly acute, till at length it almost obliterates his original sense of the family likeness.

So when we first behold the great blue sheet of water which lies on the frontier of Lombardy and Venetia, and parts the modern provinces of Brescia and Verona, we are struck with its general resemblance to Como and Maggiore. Soon, however, we note its distinctive features, and dwell upon the points in which its scenery and products, its people and their lives, are different from those of the other Italian lakes.

Its foremost distinction is its great size; and though the human eye is apt to err in such matters, no one who gazes over the ten miles of water which part the western Riviera from the eastern Gardasana has difficulty in accepting the fact that Garda is the largest of the Italian lakes. Its second distinction is still more patent to the sight. The chemical constituents of the water, the sparser centres of contamination, the greater serenity and clearness of the atmosphere, unite to make Garda the bluest of the lakes. Its intense luminous cerulean hue is in certain lights and seasons almost startling; and so sweet and limpid is the water that one is not surprised that old historians of the locality attributed to it a medicinal efficacy, both for drinking and bathing.

Its third characteristic jumps to the eye whenever a

Photo] LIMONE ON LAKE GARDA. [*Ballance*

A lemon terrace with its white pillars is just visible above the houses. The shape of the boat and its sails is characteristic of Lake Garda.

strong wind blows. Owing to the proportions of its southern bowl and its narrow, bottle-necked northern funnel, Garda is the roughest of the lakes, frequently exhibiting the "sound and fury" noted by Virgil, and even going to the length of producing *mal de mer* in its steamer passengers. The steamers, it must be confessed, are of a more antiquated type than those which ply on the Three Lakes. They first made their appearance on Garda in 1844.

The wind of evil is here known as the *Suer*. It tears down from the clefts of Monte Baldo and the cold heights of Tyrol, and whistles, bellows, and beats up the waves to froth, while the coast lines recede and fade and vanish, only the highest peaks emerging like phantoms from the mist. More dreaded, however, by the agriculturist is the much less violent *Vinissa* or *Vicentina*, the wind of Venice or Vicenza. Cold and damp, it is especially noxious in the time of blossom.

The devastation of storm and hail is dreaded more on Garda than around the Three Lakes, for here is a vegetation, and industries connected with that vegetation, of a kind or of a degree such as is only found elsewhere south of the Apennines. Citrons, oranges, lemons, grapes, figs, and peaches have long been cultivated systematically in immense quantities. The *agrumi*—a convenient collective name for the lemon, citron, orange, mandarin, and Bergamot—when grown for the market are sheltered by glazed or latticed screens attached to the white pillars, which gleam like rows of candles, tier above tier, on the terraced hills. The ground space between four pilasters is called a *Campo* (field); in a normal campo are planted first low-growing citrons, then orange, mandarin, or lemon bushes, and lastly lemons trained as espaliers against the back wall of the terrace. Sun and air thus reach all the plants. They require little depth of soil, and many terraces have only four or five feet of earth. In 1840 a co-operative society was started for the sale of lemons. Between that date and the year 1877 the net receipts of the society amounted to 8,240,931 lire, in spite of the

fact that many owners adhered to individual bargaining, and that in 1855 the dreadful "gum" or "glue" disease made its appearance. This epidemic was not checked till after 1873, when it was noticed that bitter orange trees growing among infected plants remained immune. Experimental graftings of lemons on to bitter orange stocks were successful, and the devastated lemon gardens were renewed with disease-resisting plants. Unfortunately, during the lean years the lemons of South Italy, less juicy but more easily and cheaply grown, appeared as formidable competitors; and in recent years expense of keeping up the lemon-houses has reduced profits to a minimum. One proprietor after another abandons the up-hill struggle, and it seems as though the most picturesque and characteristic industry of Garda, and one which goes back at least to the fifteenth century, may before very long be a thing of the past.

Those who have tasted the liqueur known as *Acqua di cedro* will hope that a limited cultivation of the *citrus media* may still continue. A belief in the citron as an antidote to poison was current among the Ancients, and persisted through the Middle Ages. The fruit was, therefore, part of the druggist's stock-in-trade; and when in the *settecento* a chemist of Salò used it in compounding a cordial in conjunction with the best white wine, he easily made his fortune. His recipe is the foundation of one of Salò's staple industries; reinforced by iron and quinine it retains its medicinal reputation, while unadulterated it is one of the most innocent and agreeable of liqueurs.

Another peculiar product of this particular locality is the oil extracted from the berries (called in dialect *rubache*) of the bay, the *laurus nobilis*. Formerly large quantities were exported to Holland and Constantinople; but the discovery of cheaper substitutes has destroyed the markets. Groves of "the eternal laurel" have been cut down and the soil cleared, but the plant persists and flourishes in stony places, attaining tree-like proportions and resisting cold and wind. Its sharp scent mingles with

Photo] *[Ballance*

A PEACEFUL EVENING ON LAKE GARDA.

the voluptuous perfume of oranges and lemons, and its deep, glossy green contrasts with the feathery grey of the "placid" olives.

The olive oil of Garda is of excellent quality, and in certain localities the trees attain to unusual size. And then there is a wealth of vineyard, lovely from the first shooting of green leaves till the heavy clusters are picked for the wine-press. The wine of the Benaco is of excellent quality, pure, soft, and full-flavoured; but though esteemed in the neighbouring cities, it has not sufficient stability of type for an extensive export trade. Here, as in other Italian vineyards, the dread parasitic diseases —*oidium*—worked havoc in the middle of the nineteenth century. Hundreds of families were reduced to want, and it is asserted that one-third of the property round Garda changed hands. Sulphurization and spraying with sulphate of copper have, however, after much ignorant opposition, become processes of established vineyard routine.

The fruits of Garda have been renowned since Roman times; and no more delicious cherries, pears, and peaches can anywhere be tasted. The Commune of Bardolino on the east bank is *par excellence* the fruit-growing district. Peculiarly luscious figs may still be enjoyed, as in the days when they were eulogized by Goethe or the remoter times when, as the historian Silvan Cattaneo tells us, fifty asses laden with them used daily to leave Bardolino for the market of Verona. But the century-long practice of drying figs in the sun, both for local consumption and for export into the Tyrol, which continued down to the middle of the last century, is now in abeyance, nor are the trees cultivated with the care once bestowed on them. Another tree which receives scantier attention is the mulberry. The Garda mulberry leaves were formerly reputed to produce peculiarly good silk; but the rearing of silk-worms is another of Garda's decaying industries.

It is rather sad to contrast the vigorous industrial life of days of constant danger and insecurity with the comparative inertia of our own more peaceful and law-abiding

time. The iron of Monte Baldo, the smithies of Toscolano and Campione, the wool of Salò, the linen, fine and white, of the entire Riviera, were once renowned and exported. The paper mills of the Camerate valley are still working, though perhaps they no longer produce so superexcellent an article as when, in the fourteenth century, the paper of Toscolano was said to surpass even that of Padua and Treviso. It was doubtless on account of this paper that the celebrated printing press of Paganino Paganinis, established first at Salò, was removed to Toscolano, in the third decade of the *cinquecento*. Some fifty years sooner one of the earliest printed books issued from a press at Messaga. By the way, why does Mr. Baghot affirm that Messaga must be an imaginary name since no such place ever existed? Messaga was, and is, a hamlet lying beneath Monte Castello, a little north of Toscolano, a little south of Bogliaco.

The defunct or decaying trades of Garda seem to be replaced only by a big new *cotoneficio* (cotton factory) at Campione, and a slowly augmenting tourist industry.

The latter was inaugurated and is still chiefly controlled by Germans, and is concentrated on the lovely reach of the western shore extending from Salò to Gargnano. Its pioneer was a German who had fought for Italy with Garibaldi's volunteers, and had long resided in Verona. In 1880—when a foreigner was still a *rara avis*—he came for his health to Gardone, the most sheltered spot on the lake. There he started a modest pension called after the dominating mountain, the Pizzocolo, or after himself, Hôtel Wimmer. Three years later he died; but his able and plucky widow "carried on." Two German physicians of repute "wrote up" the winter climate, and the Austrian Sud-Bahn arranged travel facilities; Hôtel Wimmer became the Grand Hotel; pensions and villas, shops and gardens, grew apace; and this "Riviera within the Riviera," as it has been called, became by degrees a second Fatherland.

The Italian is not, however, like the Swiss, a born and bred hotel-keeper; and the class who, after all, most truly

SANTA CATERINA DEL SASSO. [*Ballance*

This pilgrimage church hangs from a precipitous sun-baked cliff above the southern arm of Lake Maggiore (p. 89).

represent the temper and traditions of Lake Garda, and whose craft is the most permanent, the most essential, the most unchanged, are the fishermen. The *carpione* (salmon trout) for which the lake is famous were prized by the Romans, and requisitioned for Venetian banquets; while the magistrates of Salò considered the spectacle of carpione fishing an amusement meet for princely and distinguished guests. Modern visitors are, perhaps, chiefly attracted by the sardine fishing of May and June nights; when, rowing silently towards some boat, we may watch the stalwart perspiring figures as they haul in the immense and heavy net they call *rematt*, which seems in the moonlight to be filled with gleaming quicksilver.

Why is it that one regards with equanimity the catching of fish, and squirms at the snaring of birds? The inhabitants of Garda have an ingrained delight in both forms of netting; and the *roccolo*—which the passing tourist is apt to take for a peculiar form of rotund and trellised summer-house—appears on many a hill. To these monster traps flights of songsters are lured by the singing of caged decoy birds, and are then enclosed by a mechanically worked descending net.

CHAPTER XVII

ISEO

"A sudden splendour from behind
Flush'd all the leaves with rich gold-green,
And, flowing rapidly between them,
Their interspaces, counterchanged
The level lake with diamond-plots
Of dark and light."

TENNYSON ("Recollections of the Arabian Nights").

NONE of the Italian lakes is so little visited as Iseo, lying between the provinces of Bergamo and Brescia. Yet it is easily accessible by rail or tram, or more pleasantly by motor-car, from both cities, as well as from Rovato; while those who have been sojourning on the shores of Como may choose a yet more excellent way of approach. From Colico at the head of the Larian Lake a railway branches eastwards to Sondrio, the prosperous but uninteresting capital of the Valtelline, from whence there is now an extension to Tirano. Without any salient attractions Tirano has the quiet dignity, the harmony of ensemble, the finish of detail, so common in Italian towns, so rare in those of Great or of Greater Britain. It is very pleasant to halt there, and to visit the great Bramantesque pilgrimage church, known as the Madonna di Tirano, a mile and a half away. Next morning, retracing by car or carriage the road to Sondrio, we turn to the left at Tresenda, and begin a long ascent through forests of beech and chestnut. This is the Aprica Pass, the only connection between the Valtelline and the Val Camonica. At the summit, among open meadows and sparse pines, a little hotel furnishes a welcome meal; and then we descend through a long succession of park-like glades, passing green terraces, and little waterfalls, and old mills, and bell towers rising from groves of walnuts and chestnuts, till at length we reach Edolo, shadowed by the gigantic ridge

[Como

BOATS ON LAKE GARDA

With the lateen sails, which we know so well on the Lake of Geneva.

of Adamello. A light railway, on the eastern bank of the hurrying and voluble river Oglio, conveys us down the long Val Camonica—a more picturesque valley than the Valtelline, and not quite so intensively cultivated, yet full of vines and maize and orchards and lovely villages, and so at length to the little town of Pisogne, important under the Romans, and now leading a busy industrial life. Alpinists know it as a starting-place for the ascent of Monte Guglielmo (6,400 feet), the highest of the Brescian Alps; while less athletic pilgrims visit it for the sake of the frescoes by Romanin in the Church of the Hospital, once a monastery dedicated to Our Lady of the Snow.

Geographically the basin of Iseo resembles that of Garda; the hills which enfold it become lower and further apart as they descend southwards, and their slopes exhibit many traces of glacial action. The periodic air currents blow with great regularity, the morning breeze, blowing till about eleven, being called by the peculiar name of *Vet* or *Et*, while the afternoon breeze from the south is known here, as on Garda, as the *Ora*. The surrounding shores are fertile, but the vegetation is less southern in character than around Benaco.

The first and last phases of Iseo's history are parallel to those of the Three Lakes: in the middle period its fortunes resemble those of Garda. Its earliest inhabitants, a mixed Rhoetian and Cenomannic people, fiercely opposed their conquest by the Romans. In 1158 and 1166 Frederick Barbarossa passed down the Val Camonica, making donations of territory to his followers. Then followed three centuries of internal strife, of warfare between Scaligers and Visconti, with intervals of foreign interference, till at last Iseo lay secure within the mainland territories of the Venetian Republic. Under the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy trade here, as elsewhere, revived. Ever since the sixteenth century the Val Camonica had been famous for its armour and weapons; and the old craft secrets and traditions are to-day preserved by the flourishing iron foundries and ordnance

works at Castro, near Lovere, employing over a thousand hands, to which, as to all other industries, the utilization of the force of the river Oglio for electric power has given a new impulse.

The two towns, Lovere and Pisogne, at the northern end of the lake, are matched by two at the southern end, likewise divided between the Brescian and Bergamasque shores; and all four are connected by steamers which ply from one extremity of the lake to the other twice or thrice a day.

The steamers are not, like those on the Three Lakes, packed with tourists industriously comparing "things seen" with things read; nor is the agricultural life on these green hillsides, or the leisured life in those coquettish little villas, at all concerned with a tourist industry. There is something solid, whimsical, staid and gay, and wholly and curiously old-fashioned about these Brescians and Bergamaskers, which is entirely remote from the ultra-modern and artificial atmosphere of the Grand Hotel.

Sarnico, on the west bank, where the Oglio leaves the lake and the tram starts for Bergamo, has a prosperous silk-weaving industry, but no attraction for the tourist.

Iseo, however, on the east shore, though also leading a busy modern industrial life with its *filatoio* (silk-mills) and its dye-works, is an old walled town delightful to the artist's eye.

Half-way up the lake, just where it is broadest and also most charming in aspect, lies the largest island of the Italian lakes. It actually possesses a mountain 1,965 feet high, from which it is called Montisola. The ruined castle of the Odofredi, the pilgrimage church of the Madonna della Seriola, and the lives and work of its inhabitants—fishermen and net-makers—are the chief features of interest which it offers us.

Each of the Italian lakes has its special note of loveliness and charm, making peculiar appeal to certain temperaments or to certain moods. And the special note

Photo B[illegible]

ISOLA GARDA.

Beyond are the snow-sprinkled heights of Monte Baldo.

of Iseo is furnished by the incomparable gleaming heights of Monte Adamello.

It is when the lakeside foreground is glowing with the rich tints of autumn, or the water scintillates with the golden intensity of summer sunshine that the background of precipitous, icy peaks has its greatest effect and fascination. Consequently the small company of discerning pilgrims to Iseo show themselves less timid of Italian heat than the rank and file of British tourists; while as the Val Camonica, opening behind Lovere, gives the most superb vista of the mountain glory, it follows that they usually sojourn in this industrious little place, and that it has come to offer more comfortable accommodation than do the other three towns. It, moreover, contains a museum and picture gallery lodged in a stately building, the Palazzo Tadini. The pictures are authentic, though many of them have been badly restored; and a Paris Bordone, a Bellini, and a Morone are well worth study. Nor should we fail to visit the effective fifteenth-century church of Santa Maria in Valvendra high above the town, and to note the paintings it contains by the Brescian Moretto and his master Ferramolo, and the inlaid choir stalls by another Brescian, Fra Raffaele.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who sojourned here for ten successive summers to drink the chalybeate waters, did her best to "write up" the little town; and critics have sniffed at the inaccuracy of her descriptions of Lovere equally with those of the Martinengo garden at Salò. But the good lady was, after all, not compiling a Guide Book; and perhaps the embroideries of an enthusiast, dazzled by the glamour of Italy's atmosphere and bewitched by the wonderful stories of her past, give us more vivid impressions and a truer sense of values than do the cold and irrefutable catalogues of Messrs. Dryasdust. Turner again and again added, deleted, and transposed the actual features of a landscape, till it was altered out of all possible comparison with a photograph; but the impression seized and conveyed by the artist is nevertheless truer than that of the camera. Nor is it

ever necessary to borrow for a bit of Italian lakeland the poet's "light that never was on land or sea"; for the intensity of Italian sunlight, the translucence of the Italian atmosphere are sufficiently potent to transfigure even the commonplace and mean. And when on a golden morning we look out on a bit of "liquid heaven in the bosom of the green old woods"; or when the last rays of sunlight tinge the tree-tops on the summits of the hills, and amber cloudlets, holding the radiance of departing day, are mirrored, together with every line and tint of masonry, in the pearly surface of the lake; when these reflections fade, to be superseded, as sky and water darken, by the trembling images of stars—then the somewhat insignificant town of Lovere becomes a city of enchantment, and the always lovely lake of Iseo a bit of Fairyland.

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